



BUREAU OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE

**ZINE CATALOGUE
OF THE SOCIAL CENTER
INFORMATION PROJECT #2
SPRING 2010**

**"House Magic"
Project Continues**

**Barcelona: Fighting for
"Thousands of Homes"**

**Michel Chevalier at
ABC No Rio**

**Autonomous Zones
New & Old**

**Squatting Reports
from Hamburg,
Greece, the UK,
Scandinavia
& Poland**



WORLD WAR 3

#40



Cover: "Frente 3 de Fevereiro. Zumbi Somos Nós (We are Zumbi), 2006. Intervention on the Prestes Maia Occupation" photo: courtesy of Frente 3 de Fevereiro. The sign reads: "Zumbi is Us": Zumbi dos Palmares is the hero of 17th century slave quilombo resistance to the Portuguese.

Above: The giant caterpillar, a Time's Up bicycle float constructed at the since-evicted NYC OSC CHARAS El Bohio for a demonstration in support of community gardens, 2001 (times-up.org).

Left above: Seth Tobocman, cover for World War 3

Right below: Jerry's design for Time's Up, NYC

HOUSE MAGIC #2 WINTER 2010

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This zine and #1 are online in PDF at: sites.google.com/site/housemagicbcf/



Introduction: “House Magic” continues...

This is the second number of the “House Magic” zine catalogue. (The first is online at the HMBFC website, as this one will be.) The catalogue zine documents the project to provide information and stories from the global movement of occupied social centers (OSCs). These are autonomous initiatives undertaken by political and cultural activists in cities around the world.

“House Magic” began at ABC No Rio in New York City, a cultural center with historical connections to the Lower East Side squatting movement of the 1980s and ‘90s. This issue continues documenting the Spring, 2009 events at ABC and other events of the project later in the year. It includes also several related

articles, especially a significant text on Christiania, the “free city” in Copenhagen.

In general, this issue begins more insistently to make the connections between our local history in New York and the movement abroad. This is the not-so-hidden agenda of “House Magic,” as it continues this year with an itinerary of travel so far that includes Philadelphia, Baltimore, Detroit and London. You can follow progress on the organizing blog at “Occupations and Properties.” Please feel free to pitch in on this global propaganda effort!

— editor, Alan W. Moore



photo from the Reuben Kincaid Realty Agency project, Chicago – see reubenkincaidrealty.org

More “House Magic” Tricks

The course of the “House Magic” project in 2009 has been punctuated by numerous academic events in New York City. These meetings have concerned the financial crisis, housing, and the global subsistence crisis of the poor, those mortal hungry ghosts of neoliberalism. Most academic events I’ve attended recently have been inconclusive. Especially in 2008 and early in the year, leftist eggheads seemed to have been blindsided by the crisis.

The guiding genius of much of this recent ac-tivity is David Harvey. This distinguished ana-lyst of the urban revolutions of the bourgeoisie (e.g., his famous essay on Hausmann’s Paris) and theorist of neoliberalism gave the kickoff talk at the Baltimore conference City from Be-low in the spring. (This was a key event in the launch of the “House Magic” project.)

Harvey works at the Center for Place, Culture and Politics at the CUNY Grad Center, as does Neil Smith, a world authority on gentrification. The center supports the activist group Picture the Homeless; a text by the group’s organizer Rob Robinson is included in this issue. A crony of the center is Peter Marcuse, a grassroots urbanist recently retired from Columbia University, whose work inspired Martha Rosler in making her show “If You Lived Here” in 1989. (When the archives of this important activist art project were recently exhibited at e-flux, I was struck by the literally boxes of newspaper clippings Mar-tha had culled on the homeless “crisis” – for which we may now substitute “social movement” – of the 1980s and ‘90s.)

"What we observe is the formation of a different type of space, what I have characterized as the space of flows, in interaction with the space of places. In fact, space is the dominant dimension of our society because people build their practices of resistance in their places in opposition to the space of flows that characterizes the organization of power (finance, global deciders, the media), and articulate their places of resistance over the Internet making it the network of global resistance."

– Manuel Castells, in "Of Walls and Flows: An Interview," *OccupiedLondon.org*



Prototype Reuben Kincaid Rehousing Starter Kit: Tools Needed to Reclaim a Foreclosed Home, assemblage collage and collabo-ration, with: Chris Roberson, Emily Clayton, Dr. James Harry Ewert Jr, Rod Hunting, Adrienne Goodrich, Peter Skvara, Michael Pajon, Ryan Duggan, Chad Kouri, Matt Nicolas, Jim Kozar, Ed Marszewski, Ben Speckmann, Sarah Jezierski, Richard Smith and more.

I have blogged much of this lecture-hopping at "Occupations & Properties," and, by sheer frequency of attendance, have moved from bewil-dered outsider to the left academic urbanist community (grad students, professors and pro-fessional non-profters), to a sort of journalist's familiarity with some faces and issues.

It wasn't until An Architektur came to NYC from Berlin for a 10-day event discussing "post-capitalist space" as part of their program of "op-positional architecture" that I began to get any clear historical sense of where folks like Marcuse and Harvey have come from. An Architektur published a set of three journals in '08 on the "community design" movement for participatory planning. They list a host of efforts, some with militant names like Architects Resistance, nearly all of them formed by young urbanists during the 1960s and '70s to stand with communities against the tide of "urban renewal" in the U.S.. Many of these groups persist, neutered maybe by their long-term institutional engagements. But the impetus for their founding, the advancing phalanx of government-funded bulldozers, is so far absent today.

I said "inconclusive," and most of the dis-course I've been following is just that. It is also almost always concerned with grand

narratives, historical processes, and theoretical explanations – the hard liquor of academia.

The "House Magic" project is concerned pri-marily with an inventory and exploration of the stories of living resistance. We want to do some-thing now, together, to gain ground and take a stand. We are always Indians in the neoliberal city, and the ships full of colonists are always coming. We have to listen to our stories, and figure something out. – Alan W. Moore

NOTES

- The "House Magic" project organizing blog is "Occupations and Properties":
- "If You Lived Here Still..." An archive project by Martha Rosler e-flux.com/shows/view/7063
- Ten Days for Oppositional Architecture: Discussing Post-Capitalist Spaces, NYC 11/09 oppositionalarchitecture.com/
- An Architektur 19-21: "Community Design. Involvement and Architecture in the US since 1963" Sept. 2008, 172 pages (3 vols.), English, 10 Euro



—Sarah Lewison, from the Library of Radiant Optimism

A Roundtable Reflecting on the “House Magic” Project

This is an edited transcript of the Public School (Architecture) session on the social center movement held 10/20/09 at the Center for Architecture, NYC. This session was produced by Common Room architects, and recorded for Art On Air radio (artonair.org) by Will Corwin.

JACK WATERS: I attended the House Magic sessions at ABC No Rio [Spring of 2009], and saw Michel Chevalier there who was active in the Hamburg squatting scene that included people I've had associations with for over 15 years. Our initial encounter came because of their interest in ABC No Rio. Still, it seems that internationally, there's a lack of dialogue and interaction connecting things in a productive and active way.

All over Hamburg, as we speak, there are all kinds of artist spaces and affordable housing that's literally being ripped apart. And as the architecture is being decimated, spaces that were originally conceived and built as public gathering spaces are being eradicated and replaced by constructions that are completely the opposite, that are designed to prevent people from gathering and socializing publicly. So my interest is to see what kinds of active engagement we can develop across borders.

ALAN MOORE: That was my hope for the House Magic project, that it would be an open channel, that social centers could put in their information and we could bring it to a larger audience.

AUD: Are these networks locally active but then they don't spread beyond the city or the region?

JACK WATERS: Well, the term “network” is a relatively recent expression that often implies some kind of business interaction. I'm more comfortable with this idea of “community” and community building. These communities are very active locally. At the time that we were in Hamburg, there were agreements about selling property. There were public demonstrations different from what I've seen here in New York because they were really festive in a lot of ways. But also, the way that people are able to mobilize there is, in my experience, is much more developed than what I've seen here. It's like a street fair, a squatter street fair, basically, but it was huge. The whole city was there because it was fun. There was a big climbing wall, there was a truck that came by playing Viennese waltzes, and that was the action. Meanwhile, the streets were lined with riot cops.

Then in the days that ensued, there were these meetings that were about signing documents and agreements. There seemed to be an intergenerational divide. You had people in their 20s and 30s, and then people in their 40s and 50s who had established a lot of these bases. There was a breach of communication between those groups, even though they were all coming from the same city and the same spaces. So all kinds of discussions were going on linking these communities together. Then us having come from New York and bringing our experience with green space, public gardens, places like ABC No Rio, and our memories of what happened with the squats in New York City added another layer to these connections. Now it seems like things are in the process of formation.



ALAN MOORE: [is running a slide show and passing out books] In Europe there is very substantial publication around these different movements. Here's one I'd like to pass out by a Dutch community center that used to be a squat. They're very concerned with development in the neighborhood, the destruction of old trees in Amsterdam, things that are of common interest, like the rampant development that Jack was describing in Hamburg. The social center operates as a locus for opposing that kind of thing.

Here's a book about the occupation movement, *Social Centers in the Second Generation* [trans.; the book is in Spanish], produced by Universidad Nómada (Nomad University), which is a group of Spanish researchers, urban theorists, and people involved in the social center movement. And a Dutch book, *Cracking* [trans; book is in Dutch], the word for squatting in Holland. This book surveys many different projects and their aspects. The 56A infoshop in London has sent out a bulletin telling that a bill against squatting, to make it illegal in Holland, has passed the lower chamber. This is another picture-book, from Barcelona, and it's documenting the social centers and their resistance against the police.

The Lower East Side squatter movement was demonized in the press and attacked by Murdoch's *New York Post* as, “Look at these people, they're taking these buildings for themselves and not paying any money; they're pirates and we should all condemn them.” This was difficult to refute in deeds, because the tenement buildings that squatters took in New York City were cramped and not able to provide the amenities and public services that the larger buildings, the social centers in Europe, have been able to do. I was reminded of this problem looking again at a design by Anton Van Dalen, a Dutch artist who worked with ABC No Rio early on. The image links the Lower East Side garden and squat movement as the “Hammer + Rose.” These occupations were linked, both instances of people taking over what in the '70s were abandoned lands, owned by the city. They made the vacant housing into squats, and they also made provisions for social and cultural life in the gardens. So that's how they did the kind of work that is directly analogous to the social center movement. After they left ABC No Rio, Jack and Peter together began to run a small

community garden with an extraordinarily active cultural program, called Le Petit Versailles. It is certainly the most culturally active garden in the Lower East Side.

The “House Magic” show contained clipboards that documented the different social centers in Europe. I pass them around. This is the one from Hamburg, the Rote Flora. We have Taverna Rog, which is in Ljubljana, and Can Masdeu (which we saw in the “Tactical Tourist” video by Dara Greenwald), outside of Barcelona. And Binnenpret in Amsterdam, the House of Magic in Bern, La Casa Invisible, in Málaga, and then perhaps the original social center Leon Cavallo, in Milan.

This is a very deep movement. One intention here is to try to examine it in its historical dimension. To signify that, I have a text by the Midnight Notes collective about the battles over the squats in Zurich in 1981. And also the recent, very theorized discussions of what they call the second generation social center movement is contained in texts by the Universidad Nómada for the online magazine Transversal in 2008, an issue called “Monster Institutions.”

AUDIENCE: Is everything translated into English?

ALAN MOORE: Not the books, but the “House Magic” texts I’m passing out are translated into English, often through Google Translate, which is really choppy but you get the general idea. I’m no longer afraid of Polish.

AUDIENCE: When you speak of a rough division between cultural and politicized social centers, what do you mean by politicized?

ALAN MOORE: Well, as an example, the Seco SC in Madrid does work with immigrants, teaches Spanish, runs computer classes and they have a Critical Mass and a bicycle workshop there. They’re in the outskirts of Madrid center near a large housing project populated mostly by immigrants. They are working with immigrants from Africa, many of whom speak English, which surprised me. Seco has a free store, and provides legal assistance.

Everything is pretty much in this area of social service, which the state is not providing or that they feel the state is not providing. I see them as one end of the social center movement, with the other end being, “We just do concerts.” Cultural activities. At Seco they have nothing on the wall and they don’t do concerts. This is very different from Patio Maravillas, which produced a conference at the Reina Sofia museum.

This is a photo from Cox 18 in Milan. They did a very strong street demonstration and saved their social center from eviction. Indeed, the existence of these places is based on their ability to put people in the street. I gave a talk in early ’08 on the tradition of artist-organized spaces arising out of the large exhibitions like the Society of Independent Artists shows made famous by Duchamp, and I tried somehow to cross this with the social center movement. This photo is the staff of the Salons of America, an open show in the 1920s-’40s, like the SIA. Here is a poster for the Ninth Street Exhibition, which first exposed Abstract Expressionism in advance of the galleries. It was held in a vacant building.

This is the call for decentralized days of action for squats and autonomous spaces last year, put out by a group call Krax City Mine(d) in Barcelona, which is one attempts to network social centers. Although it is a movement, definitely, and it’s happening worldwide, globally, they’re all very local, enmeshed in particular situations.

This is a shot of the interior of ABC No Rio and it shows the way we put up the exhibition. The visual arts collective of ABC had all these clipboards, and people were adding info to them from the different social centers. We were reproducing banner designs, copying them from the materials that you’re looking at. We only got a few made. Julie Hair made this lovely pirate queen from the *What’s This Place* book. Then we had what I call social center wallpaper, where we copied the ephemeral materials put out by the different social centers and made pretty collages. Then we took some of the hotter simple SC logos and made spray-paint stencils out of them.

The first venue for “House Magic,” ABC No Rio, began in an occupation of a building in 1979 when a group of artists produced a project called the Real Estate Show. We were lucky that Joseph Beuys was in town, and came by and patted us on the head. It turns out there’s a very substantial history of occupations for political intention carried out ten years before we even thought to do anything by Puerto Rican nationalist activists, particularly the Young Lords Party. Here they are announcing their formation in the Tompkins Square Park bandshell. I made this photocopy for Michael Cataldi, who produced the University of Trash in the Sculpture Center, where there was a 1/3-scale reproduction of the Tompkins Square Park bandshell. The bandshell was destroyed by Mayor Giuliani, because the Squatter Mayday concerts were held there. It was just a focus for politicized cultural activity in the Lower East Side, so it had to go.

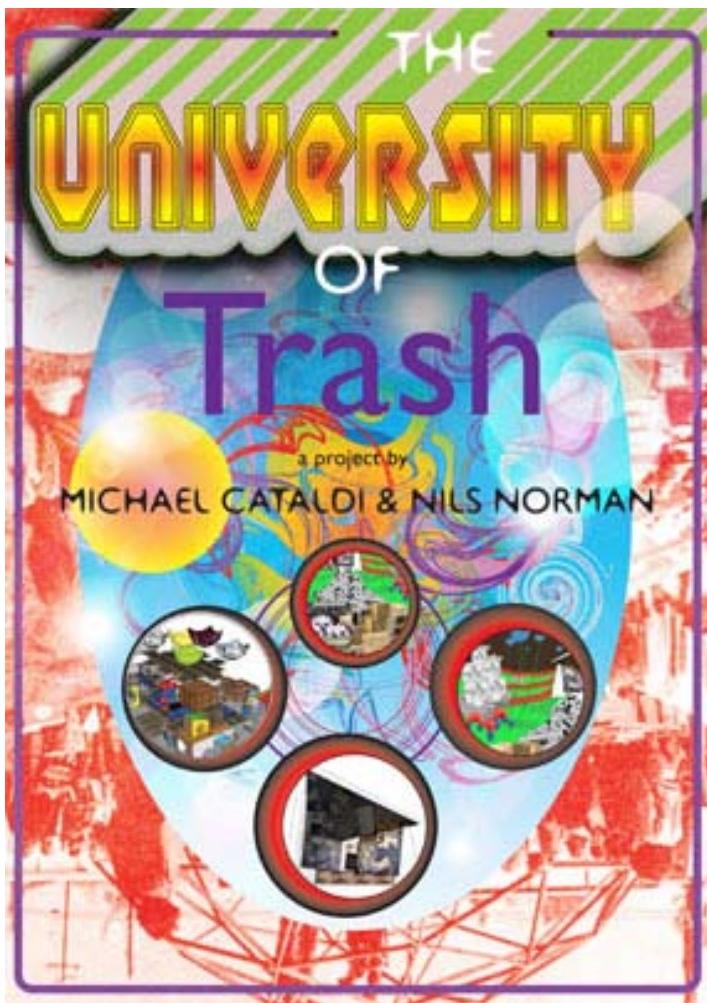
The Young Lords Party began their political career in New York very spectacularly by occupying a church, the Spanish Methodist Church on 111th Street, and opening up a people’s education center. They were inspired by the Black Panthers. They made briefly a place to speak, to feed children through a breakfast program, to distribute clothing, all the things the church was not doing. So they took it over, and this lasted about two weeks. It was a formative event in the Puerto Rican movement in the continental U.S..

AUD: The church was not participating in this?

ALAN MOORE: No, they just took it over. The YLP recently celebrated their 40th anniversary. The folks visiting from Madrid, from the Seco social center, went to that party.

This is the Garden of Eden, which was a beautifully structured garden built by Adam Purple on Forsyth Street. It was destroyed in the early ’80s to make way for public housing, despite that the Storefront for Art & Architecture had an exhibition of 100 architects’ designs for construction the public housing project around the garden. But in the calculation of the city, this garden wasn’t even. It was on occupied land, and officially invisible.

Another project happened just south of the garden that Adam Purple built called the Rivington School sculpture garden. It was a giant assemblage of metal. There is a 100-page photo book online that documents the construction, destruction, and the subsequent re-erection of this massive sculpture, here painted white for its second anniversary. Again, on occupied land. Joseph Strau at one point—he’s a German artist and curator—drew a relation between this kind of sculpture that’s sitting on occupied land in New York and work that was going on in Berlin. This is Tacheles, a huge, famous and now legalized squatted social center in Mitte, Berlin. I was told in 2006 that Tacheles received government money to renovate the living places and studios. They had also internal squatters: the people who run the bar that goes



very late and leaves drunken people all over in the morning, were refusing to pay rent.

AUD: This is now in a kind of tourist hot spot. Busses stop in front of it to pour in the tourists to visit Berlin center. And there they are, and the park and the prostitutes, and that continues despite everything around it getting polished up.

ALAN MOORE: The same thing happens with Christiania, in Copenhagen, which is a huge free city. The Tivoli Garden and Christiania are the big attractions in Copenhagen! People are fascinated by these possibly free spaces. But that doesn't stop the city government from trying to get Christiania out.

Dara Greenwald and her partner Josh MacPhee made a marvelous exhibition called "Signs of Change" of posters from social movements around the world, including many from the squatting movement. Here are a few that were in that show, including the famous "White House" poster in Amsterdam, put up by the Provos and Kabouter.

This is the website of Patio Maravillas, which is striving to become a state-sponsored, legitimated cultural center. [They were recently evicted, then reopened at a new squat.] They had a conference in early '09 about the relationship between autonomous culture and the state at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid.

AUD: How do you see the absorption of these social centers by institutions like museums that become interested in the aesthetic legacy of projects like this?

ALAN MOORE: That's an important question I can't answer. Institutionally, in Amsterdam there are numerous cultural centers that were formerly squatted. That's also true in Switzerland and Germany. There are also places that had squats, were evicted and now there's a government-run cultural facility there. Understanding this process, how this happens in different countries, is important. It's the recuperation by the state of entrepreneurial cultural energies.

JACK WATERS: This happens in Hamburg. Grassroots social institutions are established, and the city government tends to completely destroy them, then rebuild them officially. Sometimes, some of the original people are in it. It has something to do with the psychology of culture. They like making new things. So they see something that's interesting or productive and rebuild it rather than support it.

I was looking at an Aztec exhibit at the Met Museum. It's this culture that was destroyed and now is contained within the dominant high culture. There's a component of New York University called the Fales Downtown Collection, which collects the art and culture of 1980s NYC, and kind of structures this idea of a downtown that no longer exists. It's happening within an institution that has been instrumental in destroying it [through aggressive real estate purchases]. I don't think it's a conspiracy, but one couldn't exist without the other. So in order to commodify, academicize, and contain it in that way, it has to no longer exist. A lot of people are scramblin g to sell their archives, or to be put into a framework of visibility that validates them as historical figures.

ALAN MOORE: If institutions are collecting material (at NYU it is the Tamiment and Fales collections), that's good. But the question to me is how to represent it in such a way that it stimulates a growth of the activity itself.

AUD: And continues to inspire a growth in future generations.

— Partial transcription by James Trimarco

NOTES

- ABC No Rio oral history interview with Peter Cramer and Jack Waters, Sept. 6 and Oct. 9, 2007 – conducted by Liza Kirwin at the artists' home and office in New York City at www.as-ap.org/oralhistories.cfm
- Much of the material on the "House Magic" clipboards discussed in this text is on the "House Magic" website, at sites.google.com/site/housemagicbfc/
- Midnight Notes, "Fire and Ice: Space Wars in Zurich" (1981) at midnightnotes.org/pdfsacn2.pdf
- Universidad Nómada, eds., "Monster Institutions," Transversal, 2008 eipcp.net/transversal/0508
- ¿Qué pasa con Madrid? ¿Qué pasa con el Patio? Jornadas y Seminario en el Museo Reina Sofia
- patiomaravillas.net/patiomaravillas?page=9
- photo of Salons of American exhibition staff, artists and friends, 1934 April (Archives of American Art): aaa.si.edu/collections/searchimages/images/item_3405.htm
- What's This Place? Stories from Radical Social Centres in the UK and Ireland PDF at socialcentrestories.wordpress.com/

We Are Thousands: Barcelona and the Ongoing Attack Against its Squatted Social Centres

by Dunk

29 May 2007 – Last week one of the most active squatted social centres in Barcelona, Miles de Viviendas (thousands of homes) got word that they were facing eviction and a quick call out went around for support and resistance. What followed has been an explosion of activity outside the front door of this six-story two-year-squatted ex-police barracks in the heart of Barcelonetta, the village like seaside part of Barcelona. This building is the HQ of the Miles collective and amongst many things that happen here a successful Pirate University has been happening along with a local Pirate TV station for the neighborhood.

There has been a recent upsurge in evictions of squats and social centres in Barcelona, the latest of which is this one. Who knows what sort of reaction will follow?

May 29th Update: Miles evicted this morning about 6am. There will be a gathering and manifestation at 6pm in the local market square of the barrio.

[Video: Short film of the eviction and interviews | Audio]

Barcelona has had a long history of self organisation, anarchism in action, bloody battles and for nearly a year from July 19th 1936 to this week 70 years ago it was a model of a city living a successful active anarchist revolution. For many still around the world it is a model, both in those days during the Spanish Civil War and also today because it still is an amazing space of creativity, organisation, and positive direct action. Fascism existed here from the bloody end of the civil war in 1939 to the death of Franco in 1975, and in the last two decades a huge number of squats have opened up. Many of them became social centres, places that offer spaces for organisation, socializing, experimentation, for the growing body of the social movements, both locally in Barcelona and in the wider world. In the last few years there has been a huge and ever increasing rise in the evictions of squats in the city, especially the vibrant social centres that act as open spaces to demonstrate alternatives to the current economic model that is being pushed here, and elsewhere around the world.

Along with the Pirate University which they have set up at Miles and are trying to spread further afield, this group of self proclaimed pirates recently set up a TV station in the neighbourhood. Before this they had been busy recording material and having it played in local bars and the like. Miles has also been a very important point of meeting, organisation, media creation, and action from for the



local neighbourhood who are resisting the council's plans at gentrification by banging pots and holding their own discussions about what type of Barri they want: Barceloneta Es Rebel.

By calling to people to come, make and do, or simply to be, both outside the front door of the house or inside in the front room, they have demonstrated just how vibrant a space can be. Each night there have been parties, film screenings, theatre and circus shows, music gigs. By day there has been on-the-street workshops : kids' art zone on the street, clothes making, free shop, new urban garden. These activities have been participated in or attended by people from both the "activist" community and the local community. It is a fine example of how a central activist space is not purely a "political ghetto".

On that note I watched an excellent film in there on Mayday made by some of the group who are connected with Brazil's Landless Workers Movement, Movimento dos Trabalhadores

Rurais Sem Terra (MST) À Margem do Concreto (at the margins of the concrete). The film shows five busloads of men, women and children storming and taking a derelict 13-floor hotel, and being fought by bomb-throwing cops. It tells of a lad who when sent to prison succeeded in having the whole prison boycotting Coca Cola within three days.

Some people here claim that in the first few months of 2007 there were more evictions of squats in Barcelona than in the previous two years together. Many targeted spaces were highly active and organised social centres which served as nuclei for local organisation and action as well as being spaces that simply demonstrate alternatives to an ever increasing crazy world of consumption, no freetime, spending, unhappiness. Here in Miles they demonstrate by doing. It is clear here from speaking with people that there is a clearing of these hubs of resistance, the social centres, as well as the okupas that are simply used as living spaces, which is a political act in itself. But with this ever growing “war against okupas,” the attitude to evictions is “uno deselojo, otre ocupacion” (one eviction, another occupation). But it is becoming increasingly difficult to simply open more spaces.

Recently the authorities have changed their mechanism of working the law without changing the laws themselves whereby a newly opened squat can be evicted within a week by the “deselojo express,” whereas in the past once the legal process was begun it could take weeks, months, years to get resolved during which time the occupied space grows and becomes active and for a short while is yet another node in the network here. But with the new legal mechanisms there does not seem to be an equal response from the okupa movement. When I reported last about the Makabra eviction I included in the title: ¿what reaction will follow? I expected there would be actions on the streets both here and beyond by those who support the squats and try to make it increasingly difficult for these evictions to happen without some form of reaction. I say this having talked with many people in Ireland who did “stuff” to offer support and solidarity to their friends in the Danish squat of Ungdomshuset. I was also at the PGA (Peoples Global Action) assembly in Toulouse, one of the five decentralised meetings which focused on “urbanism, squatting and access to the land,” which disappointingly had no representatives from Barcelona. In the case of Makabra they successfully played a media game and then organised a great occupation of Can Ricart, which got UN housing director’s backing, only to be evicted by Mr. Ricart. Now that collective has, it seems, fallen to pieces, some here, some there, but no more circus, clowning, actions, occupations....perhaps they have another trick up their sleeve? I dont think so though, I think they are tired. But should there be, or could there be a more active, confrontational, more hassle for the authorities, type of response... RTS’s [Reclaim the Streets], road blocks – who knows?

I was part of the Dublin collective for a social centre for a year or two just before they moved into a site facing the river: The social centre scene here in Barcelona is amazing because there is so much on, always a choice of activity: music gig, film, cheap food, workshop, library, free bike workshop, gym, climbing walls, free net, free shop: the list is endless. Some social centres are not squatted but rented spaces, but many are squatted. Some squats are ghettos, non-Spanish-speaking people with little or no wish to make a real connection to their local community. Others strive for that interaction and from that become supported and fought for by the community due to the projects that have grown from the squat or centre.

In terms of organisation, there is the Info Usurpa, which is a three-page vertical weekly calendar which lists all the present social centres of the city and its environs, currently about 40, and lists the activities of the week. Most centres print this or pick it up from a centre of distribution in the city along with the week’s other flyers, posters etc., and they paste them to the wall of their centre. An easy way to find out what’s on. Along with this there are about four radio stations and a load of papers and zines that keep people up to date about things. There is also an okupa office that offers practical support to people who are looking to squat, caught up in legal difficulties, seeking advice or info. This happens in the Ruina Amalia okupa. There’s still much to learn from these centres and many more boundaries to be pushed or erased. But for the time being thoughts and energies are with the Miles pirates, on this rainy day....

Currently at Miles they have hung washing lines outside the building. You can see the knickers that Emily has hung with the freshly spray-painted slogan “somos 1000s.” The reason for this is that it recently became illegal to hang your washing outside the windows, under the new law Civilisme, or Cynicisme, as it’s commonly referred to here. They are making knickers-type banners and giving them out to their friends in the community. Perhaps Dublin’s social centre, Seomra Spraoi (room of play) which too has got its marching orders, might hang a knickers banner in solidarity with its brothers and sisters in Barcelona....

Allez les pirates!

– redacted from text at: indymedia.org/en/2007/05/886474.shtml

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The ongoing “war” against Barcelona’s okupas and its social movement(s)

October 17, 2007 – What reaction will there be now?
featured image – Where the Miles social centre was
This morning at 8.30 the Mossos arrived and carried out the eviction of another of Barcelona’s most important social centres, Ruina Amalia, one of the last few squatted spaces in the Raval neighborhood of the old city. The centre was another of the critical spaces and nodal points of BCN’s social movements. About 20 people lived in the squatted space and its social centre hosted a wide range of services and support to the social movement: Okupa office, ASF (Architects Sans Frontiers: arx without borders) support, free internet access, Carcoma the popular carpenter, costume workshop, free shop, kilombo library, theatre and dance space, flamenco patio with cheap bar and cafe.

This is another severe blow to critical nodal points of the city’s social movement. It seems blow after blow has been dealt out with no real response from the movements.... It is clear that a determined effort has been made by the city authorities to take out as many occupied spaces as it can in the city. This happens as the brand of “BCN: tourist central” brings more money and demand for space to a city that has seen rapid change. As well as shutting down many living spaces, the authorities are also using measures and mechanisms to destroy the spatial and organisational support structure of the city’s (and beyond) social movements. Last year we saw the destruction of la Makabra and this year L’Opera, Miles de Viviendas and now Ruina Amalia, each of these spaces played integral parts to both local struggles and wider points for the movement(s) here. It seems that the use of law for the “deselojo express” was not strictly legal, still many spaces were closed while

lawyers and civil society argued about the legality. I'm not sure if they still use this mechanism which basically meant that authorities arrive and hand the space an order saying "get out in seven days or you will be removed and face legal proceedings."

Ruinamalia had a court order which stated that an eviction might happen or could only happen within the court's time limit. That day passed two or three days ago and so the CSO were awaiting a new court procedure to get ready for the next round of trying to avoid eviction. BUT, this morning with, it appears, no court order the Mossos arrived and began evicting at 8.30. By 12.30 everyone was out of the building, some of the building's inhabitants were on the streets outside, builders or deconstruction workers were inside smashing stuff up, Mossos vans were on the streets keeping an eye on things.

So, what will be the reaction? OR What has been the reaction to this "war against okupas"?

Firstly, to point out that not all social centres are occupied spaces. Many which play critical roles in the movement are rented spaces like La Quimera and Info Espai in Gracia. Secondly, not all okupas are social centres, although many hope to open up at some stage as a local space for organising. Last week in Barceloneta two okupas (occupiers) were murdered. These were two Moroccans, and I'm not clear as to what exactly went on there. In Pallars, most of the okupas were not the white political-punk type, although some were. Most were sub-Saharan Africans without legal work papers who built a shanty town of sorts in the upper shell of that old factory in Poble-Nou.

The reaction: With the change of use of laws and the increase in evictions there didn't seem to be any major reaction. Was this laziness or a feeling that all will be okay, as it always has been before? Eventually an okupa demo was called to support the okupa spaces and movement, to fight against speculation, and to protest against the seemingly illegal procedures the state was using. That demo resulted in the kubotan (martial arts weapon) being used and much Mossos banging of heads. That demo also saw another new ploy by the state: the encircling of demonstrations by an entire ring of riot cops, cop vans and ambulances in front and behind, no allowing of people in or people out of the demo once it kicked off. [This has been a basic tactic of NYC police since Mayor Giuliani's reign; in fact a lot of this sounds familiar. Did multinational carpetbagger fascists from Giuliani Partners consult in Barcelona? – ed.] This was reacted to by the social movements by the two "you can't clip our wings" demos, the first of which was a heated event with a six hour standoff forming at the top of the tourist Rambla, where it joins Placa Catalunya. This was followed by a less well turned out demo last month....

Meanwhile in Dublin it seems that things are definitely going very well for the city's social centre, Seomra Spraoi. Perhaps there can be an increase in communication, solidarity... between these two cities and their movements, who are all only little drops in the global movement(s) to bring about a change to this world....

I'll leave you with the poem which is still visible from the last remaining internal wall of what was the Miles okupa in Barceloneta (little Barcelona)...

ya que tenemos que morir
que sea pues después de haber vivido
no solos y desesperados como viejos románticos
sino como hombres, mujeres, híbridos
de ser mortal [e inmortal] que somos

(roughly translating as....)

Well we know that we will die
but that we will do so having lived
not alone and desperate like those old romantics
but as men, women and hybrids
knowing that we are mortal

we are thousands

La lucha sigue!

Ruinamalia;

The occupied social centre Ruinamalia does not surrender.

Starting from the 1st of October, the occupied and self governing social centre Ruinamalia and the occupants of 11 and 11b in street Reina Amalia are in danger of eviction.

After a judicial farce, justice decided to give the rights of power to make in this site of living, a new empty building site in the Raval. The speculators will destroy completely the diversity of the neighbourhood and its spaces of autonomous socio-cultural meetings like what has happened this year with the occupied feminist house Mambo or the libertarian workshop/space of the "china neighbourhood."

With this eviction, many people and activities will be thrown out onto the street: the okupa (squat occupation) office (legal support for those looking for a house), free internet access with free software, Carcoma the popular carpenter, costume workshop and its free shop of clothes and other marvels, the kilombo library, the room for teaching theatre and dance, the flamenco patio and its Friday evening kafetas (cheap food and/or drink gatherings...little feasts with a show sometimes).... And all our dreams of constructing worlds beyond the laws of the market and competition. We will continue to imagine resistance against the control of speculation logic and its accomplices.

ruinamalia@squat.net

espai d'accés a internet gratuït amb software lliure : free internet access space with free software:
<http://ram.squat.net>

la biblioteca (library) Kilombo
<http://kilombo.squat.net>

– redacted from texts at:
indymedia.ie/article/84698?search_text=dunk

Editor's Note: Numerous videos, radio broadcasts and audio interviews are posted at these sites along with these texts. Dunk is at fuspey at yahoo dot co dot uk.

Michel Chevalier at ABC No Rio 2: HAMBURG, NEW YORK & BERLIN

In "House Magic" #1, a partial transcription of Michel's talk in April of 2009 dealt with the history of the Rote Flora squat in Hamburg and conflicts between the Berlin art space Künstlerhaus Bethanien and the squatters of IZB/New York in 2006. This partial, edited transcript picks up with the Q and A section of the talk. Only some participants have been identified.]

AUDIENCE: Is it possible that with the economic downturn alternative lifestyles and squats could be more tolerated? For example the police have refused to evict people in some recent cases of foreclosures.

MICHEL CHEVALIER: Hopefully this will be the way things go. New York has all these events on the theme of occupation—this is great I hope that happens.

AUD: I would say that that is not going to happen, as the U.S. mindset is based on private property.

ALAN MOORE: The epicenter of this movement is in Miami. Florida was the first place hit by the property collapse, so vacant buildings are everywhere, right next to tent cities. Max Rameau and Take Back the Land in Florida are prophets of this movement, and are taking vacant houses to house the newly homeless. This is happening now and the city government is not evicting them.

AUD: This is happening in Detroit as well. But the trend is to change these into new non-profits charging low rents of say one dollar a year, so the city can say, "Ah, it's the property system!, still at work."

ALAN: My hope is that through propagandizing the social center movement we can inject another idea of what to do with these vacant buildings, not just to live in them but to make them viable entrepreneurial centers of creative action. This is what happened in NYC in the 1980s and '90s. People took the empty tenement buildings as squats to live in, but they also took the vacant lots as community gardens, and they also use them to run cultural programs. Jack [Waters, present with his partner Peter Cramer], you took the garden and use it to run a very dynamic cultural program.

JACK WATERS: But we are still only there at the behest of the city, and we are only protected till 2010 when the agreement that was reached by [ex-Governor Elliot] Spitzer and [NYC Mayor Michael] Bloomberg expires. And it is not just our garden. Other NYC community gardens are also threatened with termination next year.

PETER CRAMER: That's why the question of continuity and knowing the history of the previous generations is important. The way that things are administered, the mindset shifts from generation to generation and culture to culture. That's why it is good we are connecting with Europe. Because here in NYC, artificial lines have been drawn between public gardens, housing, and

the arts. They have been put into separate factions and forced to compete with each other. Part of the problem is that these categories have been racialized, where affordable housing means people of color, art means white people, and gardening is something else, generally Puerto Ricans. This leads to questioning which is more important, when in actuality they are all important. We started to go to Hamburg in the mid '90s. There was a similar dynamic to NYC, where squats were still viable, and then there were cultural spaces like Künstlerhaus [FRISE; see related article]. Künstlerhaus was very invested in art and art making. We brought an exhibition there based on ABC No Rio's accumulated archives, called "ABC No Rio: Ten Years/Seven Days." We would go to the squatter community and they said, "We don't go to art spaces, it's too bourgeois." But as foreigners, we could bridge the gap somewhat between the arts community and the alternative social spaces, bringing these two communities together in the same space.

MICHEL: Also the artist-run centers in Hamburg, like the Wir sind Woanders #2 festival which invited visiting artists from all over Europe to bridge cultural gaps, and as far as the Hafenstrasser goes, it's somewhat of a "schizophrenic" squat split down the middle between punk rock and artists. On the artist side there was one guy Roberto Ohrt who was very involved, he became the consultant for Jason Rhodes..He had a real part in the art market. And maybe these actions where people say we are against art spaces are really more like: "We are against the guy downstairs!"

AUD: Isn't the Reeperbahn on this same border culture as well?

MICHEL: That is completely gentrified now. It's becoming like Las Vegas.

AUD: It's for sex, right? Like what Times Square in NYC used to be.

MICHEL: Yeah.

AUD: In Switzerland there are art spaces but they are not commercial. People work for free, and they try to get difficult spaces that no one wants in which to show their work. These will be spaces that are not in the main city center, or they are very cheap, or no one wants them. These spaces work together with the squatters, and are used by young artists. If space gets scarce, it is harder for people to get together and do anything outside the mainstream. The artists are dividing now. After school they are either going into the mainstream and trying to make some money and a big name, or they are working in these spaces.

MICHEL: I can say a few words about this, the Bethanien conflict [described in "House Magic" #1] is that on the other side [the squatters of New York], the people coming from Geneva and Paris were doing much more experimental stuff than the official art center, the Bethanien Künstlerhaus, which just featured really boring commodities.

AUDIENCE: Isn't there a whole anarchist contingent in that building?

MICHEL: Yes they are neighbors. There is a squat Bethanien, and then there is an art center. They have only a very thin wall between them. The art center is funded by Philip Morris,* and they threatened to withdraw their funding if the art center did not get rid of the squatter riff-raff. But on the other hand the squatted spaces like La Générale are much more experimental, with experimental music. There is a space in Grenoble called le 102 which has a fantastic experimental cinema program. So on an aesthetic as well as a formal level, what is going on really fulfills what art should be. The thing to do in this kind of case is, like the 1960s campaign against Lincoln Center in NYC, is to go on the offensive and challenge the official culture which is receiving tax deductible status. In Europe that means campaigning to have their funding revoked. Here it would mean challenging their tax exempt status.

AUD: That is similar to religious status. Churches are susceptible to the same kinds of charges. There is a movement against the discriminatory precepts that churches have, like "no homosexuals." Some time ago, that seemed like it was going to be one of the new tactics of the right wing: to revoke the tax deductible status of art spaces that did not fit their ideology. This was tail end reaction to the culture wars of the late '80s. [The cue is taken to pass the hat for ABC No Rio.] *The Philip Morris company was spun out of the Altria Group in 2008. Altria remains a major arts sponsor.

An activist group working for community gardens in NYC is at www.moregardens.org.

For a map of the Lower East Side gardens, see earthcelebrations.com/gardens/gardenmap.html

Hamburg Bulletin

Hamburg, 9/24/09 – There is a dramatic squatting situation now in Hamburg, and it is very significant. The Vorwerkstift art-residence (inhabited by art students and young musicians) offers living space in an area that has become completely gentrified, the Carolinenviertel.

It was originally a squat in the '90s, then was "normalized" by the city under the administration of an old-money foundation. The managers of the foundation have increasingly harassed the residents to provide "annual reports" documenting the quality of their work, to make "pretty exhibitions" for after-work events for foundation members, and have suspended residents' input in decision-making processes.

Since September, the residents have declared Vorwerkstift "newly occupied" and have stopped paying rent. Here is the website, www.artist-residence-hamburg.de/.

They will have videos there....

There is another "squat" situation, Gängeviertel, but it is considerably less significant, in my view, from the anti-gentrification perspective because it is in an area which had become mostly office-space anyhow, and the project has played out with the complicity of powerful people (and conservative/right-wing press), whose role is still unclear to me and to several people in the project itself. Those involved span the gamut of those especially committed to the historic preservation of abandoned buildings and opposed to their sale to a foreign investor (on the "right"), those wanting to have studios for artists and to party (in the "center"), and activists truly committed to another kind of city, to autonomous political expression and cultural experimentation (on the "left"). The class (redistribution) element occupies a confusing place in this muddle. It was never really "squatted" because, ever since the beginning, a small (non-rotating) core of the group was in negotiation with the city. I have friends who are involved in "Druckerei" building (which supplements exhibitions with concerts and political meetings). They have posted some information on a blog (<http://gv.blogsport.de/>).

– email from Michel Chevalier



Last Call Hamburg in New York

From October 2 - 12 , the FRISE project "Last Call Hamburg" with Torsten Bruch, Jörg Hochapfel, Sabine Mohr, Christoph Rothmeier, Llaura Sünner, and Joern Zehe at the garden Le Petit Versailles in the East Village of Manhattan serving as "base camp" for installations, music and screenings. Other events took place at Goethe Institut's Wyoming Building and ABC No Rio on the Lower East Side....

The focus of this project was the artistic exploration of the use and preservation of public space and public premises – particularly open – green spaces in a highly developed, urban environment. The small park of Le Petit Versailles in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, a little paradise in the midst of a highly contested and now highly valued property market, is also a symbol for the artists' engagement against gentrification and ideally suited as a platform for this project.

Closely linked to this is the question of how non-profit-work of individual artists and artist groups can be maintained and organized in such an environment. The experiences, which the Künstlerhaus FRISE has gained in its turbulent history in Hamburg, correspond to the situation in New York on different levels and are addressed in LAST CALL.

The project Hamburg LAST CALL traced different levels of information about the circumstances of contemporary artwork and the situation of artists in the city of Hamburg /Germany in general and the specific situation of the Hamburg artist cooperative FRISE. Since FRISE/ alias Künstlerhaus Hamburg e.V. was the first so called artist house (Künstlerhaus) in Hamburg and Germany-. established in 1978, its construction and reconstruction in 2003 - gives an example and a genuine story of how an artist cooperative survived gentrification and (art) market hype. Since 1989 when Künstlerhaus, hosted the ABC NO RIO SHOW "Ten Years Seven Days" the artist collective had to leave their place, find and reconstruct another building.

In conjunction with the ABZ a video- and filmmaker organization they established FRISE in 2003. To avoid a repetition of the gentrification story and another foreseeable loss of the new place they eventually founded the FRISE eG Cooperative in 2008 and succeeded to buy the hereditary tenure of the real estate from the city for 1.4 million €. So now 40 artists have a safe place to live and work in FRISE for the next 36 years.

Three most important issues define the work of FRISE:

PRODUCTION . EXCHANGE, EXHIBITION of contemporary art – 40 artist live and work in the house (painting, sculpture, drawing, video, experimental filmmaking, etc.), a guest studio



"Last Call Hamburg" show going up at Goethe-Institut's Wyoming Building, NYC

for foreign artists was established to pursue art exchange as well as FRISE artists invite artists from all over the world to stay and work in FRISE. Since 1978 a exhibition program is realized by the FRISE artists as curators, the exhibition space is subventioned by the city.

FRISE alias Künstlerhaus Hamburg as an effective cooperation of artists had a strong impact on the cultural policy of the Hamburg city and Hamburg's artist scene - in Hamburg now has developed an independent art scene with at least 16 to 20 independent art spaces - which have cooperated in the last two years 2007 /08 in an own festival called WSW 1 and WSW 2. The project roughly outlines this development by documents, screenings and catalogues....

Le Petit Versailles is a NYC public community garden in the East Village that presents a season of events including art exhibitions, music, film/video, performance, theater, workshops and community projects from May-October. LPV is a project of Allied Productions, Inc., a non profit arts organization, alliedproductions.org.

The Autonomous Zone (de Vrije Ruimte)



By Vincent Boschma

Amsterdam, Dec. 2009 — “Dit is de vrije ruimte. Veel mensen zijn vergeten, wat dat betekent, vrij te zijn. Vrij zijn is de natuurlijke staat van de mens. Vrij zijn betekent dat je autonoom bent, je door niemand laat leiden. Je bent een tijdelijke, ruimtelijke, autonome zone.” (fragment uit het gedicht ‘Here m’n tijd’ van Simon Vinkenoog)

“This is a free space. A lot of people forgot, what that means, to be free. To be free is the natural state of the human being. To be free means to be autonomous, that nobody is leading you. You are a temporary, spacious, autonomous zone.” (fragment of the poem ‘Oh Lord, my time’ by Simon Vinkenoog)

I moved to New York from Amsterdam in 2003 and studied Fine Arts at the School of Visual Arts until 2007. I moved back to Amsterdam and currently paint and do media work. I also work at the W139, an artspace commenced from a squat in 1979.

The visual document I am working on focuses on the autonomous zone in New York and Amsterdam and captures its past and present initiatives in art and activism. The emphasis is placed upon the free zones of ABC No Rio, Bullet Space, W139 and Vrieshuis Amerika. I will also briefly touch upon the existence of two recent art squats, one in New York and the other in Amsterdam. I am interviewing artists, writers, musicians, performers, filmmakers, activists, squatters, beginners and founders, collecting archive material and footage from the past and document locations, if still there. All material will be funneled into a visual document about “The Autonomous Zone.”

From the ‘60s on a vast quantity of art is created by independent artists in their independent squats. Many artists and art-initiatives prosper in these free spaces. Artists find cheap housing and, due to limited financial burden, are able to experiment without the necessity that it should financially repay. The fact that new proprietors of a building run a space themselves enables them to plan the in-

ner area in a versatile and flexible way. They can do things, which outside the free space would be bound to regulations.

The presence of various little enterprises and other artists with various disciplines allow them to help each other. Free spaces form a network for artists in which facilities, skills and ideas can be shared. A network of free spaces is not only important for the production of art but also for its absorption. They are almost always open for public. People go there to listen to music, look at theatre and film screenings, galleries and cutting-edge exhibitions can be visited and some even organize cultural festivals where one is introduced to various disciplines in art.

These free spaces, and artists associated, convey the unspoiled artistic production that emerges in and from an independent attitude. Under these conditions, and not marred by institutional development, art, music and performance will flourish at best. Artists can live, work and experiment freely. An autonomous zone is for creating new works and therefore to explore new artistic possibilities.

All spaces mentioned in this document arose out of squatting. They arose out of a need. They have been undertaken in order to create a social and cultural free space for experimental art, music, readings and performances. Many places founded by squats of the past led to the rise of important cultural spaces that still exist today in both cities.

ABC No Rio, founded in 1980, is a collectively-run center for art and activism at 156 Rivington Street, New York. Begun by a group of Colab artists, ABC No Rio opened a space that invited community participation and encouraged the widespread production of art. www.abcnorio.org

ABC No Rio was spawned by the Real Estate Show at 123 Delancey Street in 1979. Colab artists took over the abandoned building and opened an outsider art gallery. The Real Estate Show was a collective exposition open to all artists and exhibitors. They envisioned a new kind of art show, interactive and collective. At the opening Joseph Beuys supported this temporary artists' dynamism, soon closed by the city and police intervention. After firm negotiations with the city, the initiative of ‘The Real Estate Show’ was relocated to Rivington Street. At this location, from 1980 on and up to the present day, ABC No Rio seeks to facilitate cross-pollination between artists and activists. In June 2009 ABC No Rio has been awarded \$1,650,000 in City funding for the planned construction of a new facility at 156 Rivington Street.

Bullet Space, located on 292 East 3rd Street, between Avenue B and C, was founded as a squat and still exists as an autonomous art space. “Bullet Space is an act of resistance and a community access center for images, words, and sounds of the inner city.” The center was founded in the winter of 1985 and was part of the squatter movement. The ground floor of the building is open, like a bulletin. ‘Bullet’ first originated from the name brand of heroin sold on the block known as bullet block. It encompassed the accepted American ethic of violence: ‘Bullet Americana,’ translating that into the art form as weaponry.

'The Perfect Crime' / 1983 – 2008, 25 Years Andrew Castrucci & The Bullet Space Archive, is an exhibition curated by Carlo McCormick. It showcased a group show from November to December 2009 with artists participating from the Lower East Side art scene and included contributions and additional writings and illustrations by the editors. <http://andrewcastrucci.com/bulletspace/>

On October 1979 Warmoestraat 139 was squatted by Guus van der Werf, Marianne Kronenberg, Martha Crijns, Reinout Weydom and Ad de Jong. They needed a place in their hometown to show their artworks and those of their friends, showcase bands, and do performances. For the first ten years, the huge spaces of W139 were a free state, which were run by a series of artists collectives.

Ad de Jong, as first director, with Kitty van Roekel decided that W139 should be about change and the energy of artists. This developed in the idea of appointing a new director responsible for W139's artistic policy for the relatively short period of two to four years. Now the director is supported by a staff of five employees, some interns, freelancers and volunteers. So far, W139 has hosted little more than 450 shows by more than 1700 artists, which have attracted roughly 10.000 visitors a year. "Thanks to the unremitting dedication of many, W139's do-it-yourself mentality has been instrumental in buying, expanding and renovating our building."

Renovation of the building in 2005 was an absolute necessity. The previous owners had put minimal effort in the building, just enough to keep it standing. "The local authority had not enough money to finance the renovation of the premises, so the question arose: can we do it ourselves? We have always seen that as an opportunity and answered yes." Because W139 saw it as an important step towards and autonomous functioning they acquired the building. The financing took place by way of an estimated 50% financial aid and 50% bank loans.

Eventually the construction took 15 months. W139 wants to function as autonomously as possible but wants to pay attention to the surroundings. The Warmoestraat is a rough street, just around the corner from the Red Light District, Dam Square and world's first Stock Exchange, where local residents, business people, prostitutes, junkies, students and tourists walk through. During centuries there have been little changes made to the exterior of the area, the 'Blaauwlakenblok', the premises are very close to each other. W139 has, so to say, constructed "a new box" in an old existing box. The entrance has become much more open and invites to come in. The interior of the new spaces have been fitted with new sound-proofed walls, so artists can not only work during the day, but also at night and, apart from a section of the wooden roof construction, everything you see in W139 is new.

During the years, W139 established itself as the kingpin for contemporary and experimental art in Amsterdam. Since 1979, it is a space for continuous production and presentation of Contemporary Art. Dedicated to risk and experiment, they show eight to ten exhibitions a year organize readings, concerts, performances. Since its establishment, shaping a new, living unity between works of art, space and public became the mission. www.w139.nl

Vrieshuis Amerika (1994-1997) was an impactive squat and a momentous autonomous zone in Amsterdam. In its heyday, the old meatpacking factory accomodated large exhibitions of contemporary and experimental art, music, performances, readings, theatre groups, cafe 'IJburg', a restaurant with punk concerts on Friday night, an indoor skate-hall, a small movie-theatre with nights for independent filmmakers, a club for dance music, an art & music



NOORDEGEVEL VAN HET PAKHUIS DE ZWYGER AAN DE HANDELSKADE, A'DAM
ARCH. Iw. K. BAKKER EN I.A.J. DE BIE LEUVENING TJEENK
festival, studios for art, music, performance practice and programming of TV and radio shows, etc.

Vrieshuis Amerika was closed in 1997 by the city. More than half of all free spaces that emerged from 1975 on disappeared. A number of these important free spaces, like the Vrieshuis Amerika and the Silo could not continue to exist. The importance of autonomous zones for Amsterdam as an artistic free city was ignored for a long time by the city government. Many free spaces were marginalized by seeing them as zones of political resistance and as a threat to the order in society.

In 1998, a number of developments resulted that free spaces became a hot topic on the political agenda. After the clearing of a few free spaces, and 10 to 15 were threatened, artists and squatters decided to get together. Twelve free spaces formed an assembly, the 'Gilde van werkgebouwen aan het IJ' (Guild of workspaces on the IJ) that represented the autonomous zones of Amsterdam.

Both Vrieshuis Amerika and the Silo were located on the IJ. Both groups played key roles and had intensive discussions with the city about the need for and the importance of autonomous zones. They protested and warned that they would leave and work and live in other cities, like Berlin or Barcelona. They had nowhere to go and rents were getting too high. A lot of media attention and action committees formed the necessary back-up.

A turning point became noticeable and policymakers realized that these places should have played an important part in the cultural and creative life of Amsterdam: in the city in general and also in the careers of starting artists in particular. They even memorized the anarchistic nature and temperament in these autonomous zones. The response of the city came in May 1999, with the establishment of 'Broedplaats Amsterdam.' The city wanted to give more space to individual artists, existing free spaces should be preserved and new 'broedplaatsen' (breeding-places) would come into existence.

This project group was erected by the city and currently acts as the divider of city funds. They also act as the negotiator between groups of artists who want to start a breeding-place and the city. The aim of this project was to secure living and working space for artists. The city wanted to create 1400 to 2000 affordable work-spaces for artists in six years. However, in exchange for this subsidy, the city wants to control the organization of artists and even make demands on their income.

How much is left of that freedom? Inside these breeding-places there are many regulations and I don't know many artists that can afford a rent that high. Most spaces go to young and hip graphic companies and agencies focused on commercial, money oriented

products and popular media. Also, hardly anything experimental or interesting is taking place in breeding-places unfortunately. In there, they tend to focus more on keeping up with mainstream society and working with what's already there. It lacks the authenticity of a free space, which attracts the attitude to experiment and create something new.

The city's solution to the disappearing free spaces in Amsterdam should be seen as a seizing reaction or annexation of the true anti-culture of the autonomous zone. Inside these breeding-places they copy and mimic the life of free spaces. These 'free' spaces are legalized, subsidized and under control by a city-board with even a few former old squatters joining them.

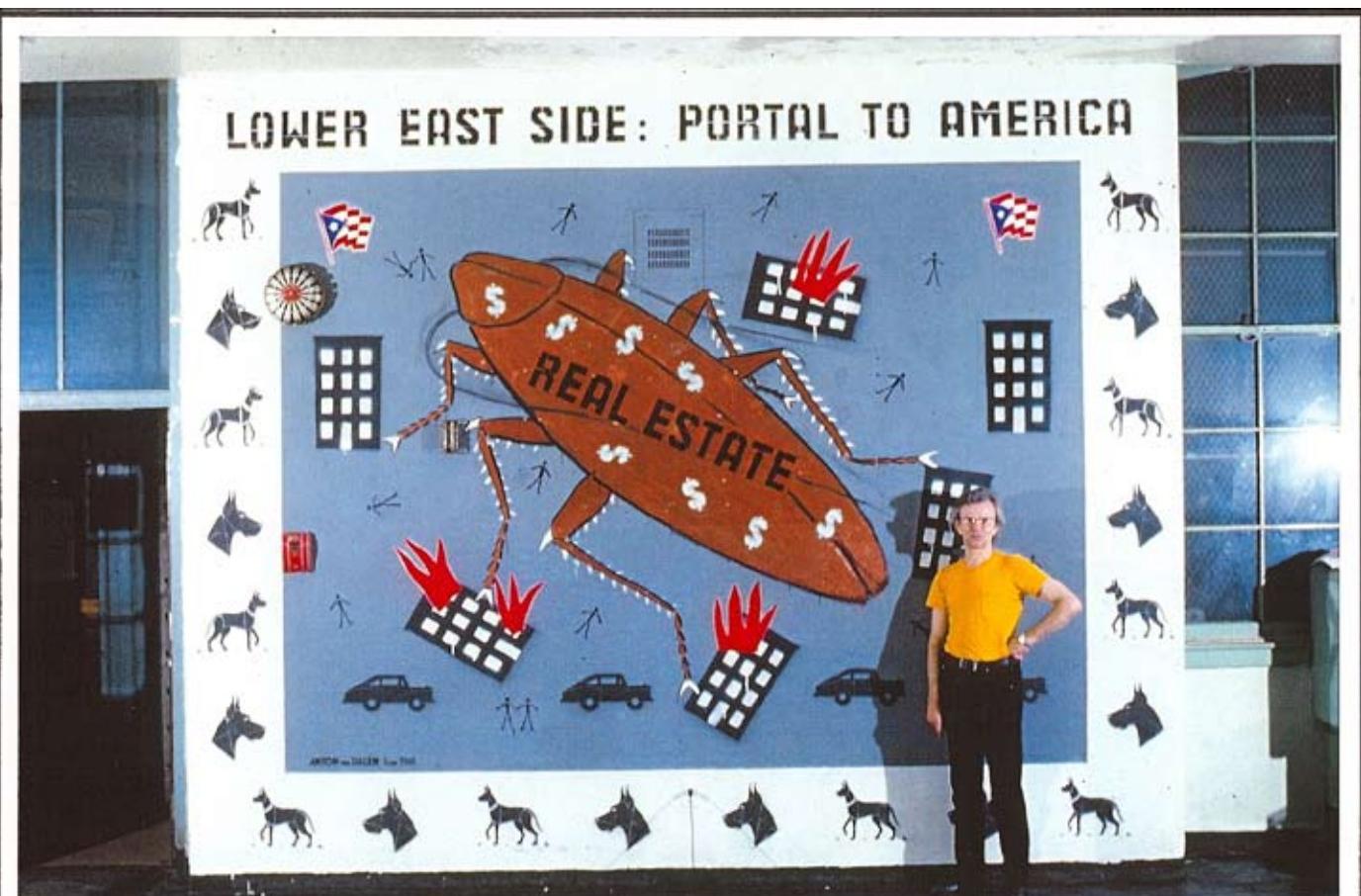
You can't create the underground with limitations and under control.

Autonomous zones in New York and Amsterdam will always be under the radar. Buildings are still taken over and show interesting experimental art, music, theatre, performance, readings and exhibitions. These buildings and their true free zones are of the highest importance since, in absence of external rules and high rents, interesting and unexpected artistic things come into existence. These places create the signs by not following them.

ABC No Rio oral history interview with Steven Englander, Sept. 7 and Oct. 10, 2007 – conducted by Liza Kirwin at ABC No Rio at www.as-ap.org/oralhistories.cfm

One current art squat in Amsterdam is called Schijnheilig. It is a group of artists who started squatting six years ago. Last January, they squatted a big old building on the Passeerdersgracht. Now they organize group exhibitions, nights with performances and readings, poetry, art shows, underground (punk) band nights, the lot. See www.schijnheilig.org.

'The Sanctuary of Hope,' a former church on 476 Onderdonk Avenue in Brooklyn, New York, was taken over by a group of artists to create an open experimental artspace. The S.O.H. altogether organized 5 large exhibitions carrying names like The Revival, The Walkout, The Awakening, The Witnessing and The Becoming. These nights were a cross-pollination of art, performance, theatre, music and multimedia installation. They also conducted small exhibitions, readings, residencies for artists, workshops, performances and concerts, from October 2007 until they were evicted by a resistant landlord in July 2009. The S.O.H. was the recipient of a sponsorship by the New York Foundation of the Arts: thedeterritorializedchurch.com



ANTON VAN DALEN Title: LOWER EAST SIDE: PORTAL TO AMERICA 148" x 180"
Medium: Stencil prints Sprayed and latex paint. 1981 - Ninth Street "Survival Show."
EL BOHIO - CHARAS 605 East 9 Street.

Anton Van Dalen with his mural in CHARAS El Bohio cultural center, 1980.



The Rivington School started by Ray Kelly was an offshoot of the No Se No Social Club which started on the Lower East Side on Rivington Street. The No Se No was a Puerto Rican Social Club 5 steps down into a basement that Kelly and friends proceeded to turn into an art gallery and performance space. Among the many notables that performed there on the little stage at the end of the bar were Taylor Mead, Phoebe Legere, and a host of others. Ray would keep an open book and anyone could sign up to perform or hang their art. All drinks were a dollar. One summer, they sponsored, "99 NIGHTS" of performance, and Toyo took pictures every night, and then would go home and print up 8 by 10's to hang on the wall the next day.

A year later Kelly and friends took over an abandoned lot on the corner of Rivington and Forsyth. They were welders and would scour the Lower East Side for scrap metal and bring it over in Kelly's old truck and weld it up. Amongst the early artists were E.F. Higgins III, Cowboy Ray Kelly, Toyo Tsuchiya, Linus Coraggio, Tovey Halek, Jack Vengrow and FA-Q (Kevin Wendell). And after 3 years the Chinese owner of the lot got a ticket for having a sculpture over 20 feet tall that almost killed several people.

The Rivington School was forced to move out of the first sculpture garden on a cold winter's night with the snow coming down. The bulldozers arrived and mentioned to us later, "You guys welded this stuff up pretty good. We figured it would only take us two days to tear down, but it already took us a week."

The 2nd Rivington School moved down the block on Forsyth to another vacant lot and rented a small storefront. Here the welding continued and Tovey Halleck set up a blacksmith forge in the back. This was adjacent to Adam Purple's yard and this Rivington School lasted a couple more years.

The 3rd Rivington School was located at 6th street between B and C. Ray Kelly hooked up a hose, dug a trench and said "River Runs Through". -E. F. Higgins III, 2007

www.rivingtonschool.com



Bullet Space: “The Perfect Crime,” a reading

At an event during a show of the archive of the Bullet Space art space in a squat in New York – a 25-year survey, prepared by Bullet Space director Andrew Castrucci, which included photographs, drawings, paintings, sculpture, objects of utility, posters and texts – your editor read from some of the texts in the catalogue, and opined upon them.

The title of the show was “The Perfect Crime.” Exhibition curator Carlo McCormick wrote of the title, “there is no perfection, only the approximation of the ideal, an aesthetic rendering of the criminality that lurks in all our imaginations, the trophies of what we got away with and the relics of what we do to get by. It is an imperfect crime.” He writes further that “the artifacts from the settling of this squat speak to the forbidden crafts of crime.” Indeed, there are tools shown here, made by hand, to take water from the city. But these are tools of the building trade which have been turned not to the trade, but to the requirements of living. When people who know how to build and fix buildings use that knowledge to make provision for themselves and their community, rather than selling their skills to capital, then something different begins to happen.

The poet Michael Carter wrote of the highly aestheticized objects in the show that, while “these works point back to a personalized legacy of involvement with Bullet Space, they are often also a somewhat coy attempt to see that legacy as an already aestheticized experience, brim with art-historical tropes or in-jokes.” Carter grapples with the aesthetic precedents for Castrucci’s artwork, Van Gogh, Magritte, and others. The question may arise, what struggles and trials of society inspired these earlier works, whose message now seems “cryptic”?

The catalogue includes a timeline, from 1984 to the present, which includes many political events. Castrucci notes that in 1984, the U.S. Congress voted to cut off aid to the Nicaraguan “Contras,” the counter-revolutionaries fighting the Sandinistas. President Reagan resorted to illegal, covert means to keep that money flowing. At the end of 1986, Senate hearings began. These coincided with the first attempt by the city to evict the Bullet squat. When the government itself is acting with gross illegality against leftists in other countries, how can people who try to take back some land be condemned?

1987 – The first manifesto of Bullet Space is entitled “Art as a Means of Resistance,” an urban artists’ collaboration. The number of homeless in NYC has risen in the last 10 years from 20,000 to

100,000. George Bush the first proclaims a “New World Order” in his state of the union speech to Congress.

1989 – Bullet Space provided the principal artistic content in the show “If You Lived Here,” organized by Martha Rosler at the Dia Art Foundation space in Soho. This show, concentrated on housing and homelessness. Martha invited dozens of activist housing groups to “set up shop” in little booths in the large open space. Devised in consultation with Group Material, it was an influential early form of the “platform” exhibition. Berlin Wall falls.

In 1991, the height of the squatter resistance on the Lower East Side, the Catholic priest, Father Kuhn, is transferred by the New

York archdiocese for ringing his church’s bells before and during city evictions.

1995 – The mobile pirate radio project called “Steal This Radio” locates their antenna on the Bullet squat roof. The radio station moves around various squats on the Lower East Side for a period of three years. Bullet Space held a benefit to raise money to build water wells in Chiapas.

In his text “Fire,” Bruce Witsiepe writes, “It is for you or I to articulate a vision within the ordered pages of a book, to caress into existence a way.... Why accept the given by letting critique weigh heavier than creation, than the praise that life implies, for isn’t that what we do? Unwilling or unable to say what I want and always to focus on I don’t.” Witsiepe’s text is vague, but it seems he is speaking about self-censorship, that which shuts the mouth. Critique is reception, is hearing and responding. It can come from an insistence on utopic strivings, not from

a love of the status quo. Not all critique comes from the mouths of police.

Finally, the poet John Farris wrote a beautiful definition of anarchy, recalling “a flight of small birds I recently witnessed training for what I realized was migration and the avoidance of predators whose imperative was speed and precision of flight, and how the anarchist rejects the dictates of the indifferent state and other authority in favor of groups formed of voluntary cooperation among individuals, the act of evasion expressed in these unions from which an art is produced from alienation and close community, managing to maneuver for survival.” Yes, and even small animals can fight back against the “predator state,” and it’s mate “predatory capital.”

– Alan W. Moore

cf. andrewcastrucci.com

image: Andrew Castrucci, *Untitled*, steel and wasps’ nests



Telestreet: Pirate Proxivision

by Patrick Nagle

Telestreet" is the name for the collective of short-range television stations in Italy that take advantage of gaps in signal coverage to broadcast their own content. Telestreet stations make use of TV receiving technology's capacity to transmit signal. Franco Berardi (a.k.a. Bifo), a founding member of Italy's first pirate station OrfeoTV, notes that because telestreet employs consumer-grade technology for broadcasting, its range is limited to a small area; thus, telestreet is not so much tele-vision as it is proxivision.

There is a historical precedent for pirate broadcasting in Italy set by Radio Alice, a pirate radio station started in Bologna in 1976 broadcasted from an old tank transmitter. The station was politically affiliated with Autonomism, known in Italian as Operaismo (literally "workerism"), a distinctive subset of Marxism that focuses its analytical efforts on the functioning of the workplace and the importance of immaterial labor to capitalist economies. The station eventually closed in 1979, but not before inspiring countless other pirate radio stations throughout Italy, some of which still operate.

Yet Radio Alice and Telestreet share more than an independent ethos: Franco Berardi, who founded OrfeoTV, is an autonomist thinker who played a role in Radio Alice. Telestreet is thus part of a rich tradition of pirate broadcasting and autonomist politics in Italy. But to understand Telestreet, we cannot merely locate it in a tradition; we also need to contextualize it within its moment--Italy at the turn of the 21st century.

Italian TV has two main networks: one is state owned, the other is a private station started by Silvio Berlusconi, currently the prime minister. According to the Economist, Berlusconi, while serving as Prime Minister of Italy, has retained effective control of 90% of all national television broadcasting. He also owns a print publishing house & myriad other enterprises. We can therefore read Telestreet as a reaction against Berlusconi's domination of the media. Yet while the emergence of Telestreet is seeped in past and present Italian leftist politics, the medium is by no means the exclusive domain of the radical left.

Broadcasted content, which varies by station, is often a mix of popular entertainment; segments by local videojournalists & documentarians; amateur ventures into video art, film, & even traditional TV narrative genres; and programming drawn from archives and the internet. Telestreet thus cross-pollinates with the internet, print media, video, and even local gossip. This diversity of content raises an important issue for my examination of telestreet: the medium is not restricted, in theory or in practice, to politically radical broadcasters nor to original content. In fact, telestreet is a popular way of distributing pirated pay-per-view soccer games and other forms of commercial entertainment free of charge. An anonymous journalist (under the nom de plume Luther Blisset) claims that there is at least one Christian station. Telestreet thus poses a crucial question for radical media: Can a media practice be radical by virtue of its form alone?

TeleStreet seems to be poised between alternative and tactical media. Telestreet is relatively mobile, spreads easily, has the ability to engage with current political issues, and flouts the law to capture unused channels within a mass medium (qualities that have all been associated with the tactical); yet stations most often take the form of identifiable, relatively stable, local sources of information (often associated with the alternative). Perhaps the best way to articulate the tactical and alternative elements of Telestreet is to say that tactical interventions become possible within an alternative media source. Telestreet provides an opportunity for tactical practice that can be easily accessed / deployed by turning a TV to a certain channel.

TeleStreet does not offer any guarantee of political radicalism. Indeed, "Luther Blisset" argues that one of Berlusconi's television stations, like telestreet, is operating illegally, only using a much more high-powered transmitter. But herein lies the difference between Berlusconi and Bifo: telestreet takes consumer-grade materials and transforms them into broadcasting systems at a relatively low cost; Berlusconi, on the other hand, leverages his political and commercial clout to further saturate the television market. There is, I argue, something radical in the telestreet form itself, but perhaps this radicalism has more to do with roots than with political ideology. Like a plant's roots, telestreet insinuates itself in whatever space is available, forging connections. In some sense, taking broadcasting into one's own hands is political - perhaps a fundamental condition for media politics. But this act alone is not sufficient. The channels thereby opened are ambivalent, open to any kind of content. Perhaps the greatest potential of telestreet is that opening new, grass roots channels within a traditionally "mass" medium provides an opportunity to shift the terrain of politics itself, to bring new issues to the fore and to experiment with alternative forms of political practice.

- a short documentary about TeleStreet is at archive.org/details/telestreet2
- the video manifesto of OrfeoTV, the first TeleStreet station is at video.google.com/googleplayer.swf?docid=129984323148534231&hl=en&fs=true
- protest footage filmed for a TelesStreet station: Youtube search = ksl brescia ctv telestreet brescia 28 febbraio 2009
- InsuTV's live feed is at insutv.it/index.php?sz=2&id=52
- a more technical explanation of how TeleStreet stations broadcast is at docs.indymedia.org/view/Local/TeleStreet
- further reading: "Telestreet: 'The Public Is Not for Sale,' The street television movement in Italy" (ca. 2003) by Matteo Pasquinelli. servus.at/VERSARGER/64/telestreet.html

El Patio Maravillas Turns a Corner

MADRID, JANUARY 5, 2010 – Twelve hours after its eviction from the Acuerdo street location, Patio Maravillas has opened a new headquarters on Calle Pez number 21. Accompanied by 1,500 people who were concentrated in peaceful Plaza del 2 de Mayo. 600 people are now concentrating on the exterior of the building and are slowly getting to know the property.

The derelict building for many years belonged to an estate which is in bankruptcy, leaving the building in a situation of sequestration.

How To Create a Cultural District and Have it Vanish Into the Morning Mists of Dawn

Artists are akin to locusts, driving out residents and raising rent prices soon after their arrival. Why not create an arts district based upon ephemerality and mobility instead of physicality and singular preciousness. Have a group of artists create projects for street corners and sidewalks. Set up shop for a few hours in the middle of the night. Recreate your new arts district somewhere else some other time....

Focusing on the benefits of temporality and mobility over the usual gripes concerning the acquisition of space and gaining a

El Patio Maravillas continue negotiations with the city in search of a legal solution for maintaining project activities which have already done in the old courtyard home.

From El Patio website – Google translate



physical foothold within an area, "How To...Create a Cultural District (and Have it Vanish Into the Morning Mists of Dawn)", for only a few hours in the middle of the night, creates an area of engagement, display, interaction, experiential localities, and a heightened sense of place. Placing/enacting works in the doorways, trees, sidewalks, grassy strips of wayward land under highway overpasses, the project creates for viewers a new area devoted to shared experience, group think, and instant communities, that seem to emerge as if out of thin air. Then, as the sun comes closer to rising again, it vanishes into the ether without a trace. This action, if repeated in a variety of areas, giving no prominence to specific location but rather the roles that many different areas can play, helps to create a sense of an artist district that is as large as the city itself. Each location fits into a larger whole and bears no greater degree of being the "it" place to be than the next. The process and participation create the cultural district, leaving the living up to us.

- Red76 (August 2005, Portland, Or.) at:

red76.com/culturaldistrict.html



Christiania: Survival of the Interesting



"House Magic" installed at Basekamp, Philadelphia, January 2010

This talk was given by Rebecca Zorach on April 2009 after a screening of the feature length documentary "Christiania You Have My Heart" (1991) by Nils Vest. (The film is available on the internet.)

I went to Christiania as part of a weekend session on 1968, 40 years after, in Chicago, Mexico City, Copenhagen and Berlin. There were representatives from all these cities, and I was the Chicago rep, since I worked on a publication about Chicago in 1968 and 2008.¹ The session was held in one of the social centers – the "Folkets hus" ("people's house"). I think that was a legal one, but there has also been a lot of recent activity around the "Ungdomshuset" (the "Youth House"), where people were evicted a couple years ago. It is really ironic, because the "Youth House"

was taken over by this right-wing organization which is called the "Father's House."

Christiania is the leading European example of a big squatted community. The tour guides call it a 'social experiment,' which is a phrase that is used a lot. It was almost mobilized by the Christianites themselves to argue to the authorities that, because it was an experiment, it should be allowed to continue. It's actually been studied an enormous amount by sociologists and anthropologists, and it quickly managed to achieve this kind of status with experts in different fields. There was an exhibition in the mid-1970s at the National Museum, and urban planners with institutional standing in Denmark studied it. So the fact of its being studied was part of the argument that it should be allowed to stay. It is an interesting example of a strategy of creating institutional ties on the basis of research: because we are the object of research, we should be allowed to continue.

¹ AREA Chicago magazine #7, "The Inheritance of Politics and the Politics of Inheritance"; online at 1968.areachicago.org.

Christiania is constantly fighting to stay. They had arrived at an agreement with the Social Democratic government, and then a right-wing government came in the mid-1990s and started this concerted effort to kick them out. When I was there in the fall, the State was offering them an agreement on terms that most of the Christianites were not in favor of, which was that anyone who was currently living there would be allowed to stay, but not necessarily in the houses they were living in. The State wanted to tear down all of the buildings in a certain area so they could make a recreation park that would attract tourists. They would keep other, less green areas closer to the city, and build apartment buildings so the citizens of Christiania would be allowed to stay there. But obviously people wanted to stay in their own houses. So in November of '08 they were still fighting in the courts.

There was also a broader squatting movement in Copenhagen in the 1980s and early 1990s which continues today, although it is not as significant in terms of numbers or politics as it was for a while. The film ["Christiania You Have My Heart"] was made in 1991. The squatting movement was at its height then, and Christiania was a model for the squatters too. As an ongoing community, it gave people a sense of possible alternatives.

Another interesting thing from the film is how much ritual you can see people creating alongside the political performance. Some of it is anachronistic, drawing on Danish folk traditions. This ritual created a sense of community and identity.

When I visited I spent time talking to a resident who is also a historian of Christiania. He said one of the current problems – aside from city and national pressures – are generational issues between people living there a long time versus a short time. That was brought up by the artist, the painter [in the film], who talked about younger people who just moved in and didn't know about the history and the traditions.

But the historian said that there are also problems with some of the people who've lived there longer, because they expect certain privileges that other people don't have. Some people use it as a summer home and don't live there in the winter. So they contribute rent – which is a minimal rent that covers services – but they are not contributing to the community in the same energetic way that they might have when they first started. So there is this tension, the same as you might have in other communities, where some people – because of the length of time they have been there – think of themselves as having a certain kind of authority that allows them to bend the rules. [I don't want to overstate his somewhat offhand remarks.; I do not know how many people this applies to]. But it's part of this ongoing experiment that is now in a third generation (or more), and they have to deal with these issues. When people first moved in, no one thought that they were necessarily going to spend a long time there, so they've had to keep reinventing themselves over a long period of time.

Those are my observations, and I may be able to answer some questions, but I am curious what people thought and maybe we could just have a discussion.

AUDIENCE QUESTION: How big is the whole area? It is a former army base?

RZ: It's a former army base, it's pretty big. I think we walked the length of it in 40 minutes, the long way ([it's actually a lot smaller than I thought; more like $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{1}{4}$ mile, or ; it's 34 hectares]. . We could include this info??] It lies along a river and there is a real

difference between the areas closer to the city versus those further out. The areas on the other side of the river from the city are much more like rural living. But there are over a thousand people living there, although I am not sure what the exact population is.

AUD: What about gentrification and squatting in Copenhagen?

RZ: Well, there were squats all over the city in different parts. The one I spent the most time at was, the Folketshus, I don't know what the relationship between the neighborhood now and how it was before. It didn't have the flavor of a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood. I think that when the city has moved in on the squats to evict them, it has not always been to attract business to the area or to develop it for private real estate. Like in the case of the Ungdomshuset, it was so this Christian organization could use the space.

AUD: What about social democracy in Denmark?

RZ: There are many social guarantees; there is a very strong sense of the Social Democratic state. But the right wing government is trying to use this Social Democratic idea to keep out immigrants. It is a very racist government, and they are mobilizing this sense of: "the Social Democratic tradition in Denmark is under siege, we have to preserve it for ourselves and not let any of them in," right? So it is kind of a double-edged sword. But it is a good tradition for those who have access to it.

AUD: Has Christiania's notion of a "free state" been emulated elsewhere in Europe?

RZ: Imaginatively or temporarily. Artists will do a project where they declare a territory a free state, but not in a community praxis sense of it, at least not that I know of. In Christiania, they have their own currency, they argue they are not part of the EU – and while you can just walk right in, you are crossing a border when you cross into it.

One thing I don't really understand is the aftermath of the moving of the main entrance. The old main entrance was the site of drug-dealing that the Christianites were unhappy with, so they moved it. But it seems natural that the drug dealers would just move to the new location.

The police had pushed drug dealing into Christiania. And it was easy to be pushed in, because people were tolerant and let people do what they wanted to. But the police created these opportunities for confrontation in Christiania by telling the drug dealers to go there, and then they went into Christiania to attack them.

AUD: Can the situation in Christiania be read together with shantytowns in other parts of the world? I read Mike Davis's *Planet of Slums*, and he recounts that there is constant attention to building "decent housing" for the people in the shantytowns, which of course is alienating and destroys their sense of community, and any autonomous control over the space. It sounds as if the government is saying to Christiania, 'it's substandard housing, so we're going to come in and bust your community and fix your problems.'

RZ: The national government put out a call really early on, like in the mid-1970s to architects and planners to develop a plan for Christiania. It sounds as if no actual architects would do it, because

people were in solidarity with the community, and so none of the plans they got were workable or satisfactory.

The idea of redeveloping the area is a kind of devil's bargain for the inhabitants... this area is a source of tourism for Copenhagen, so the State would like to preserve some aspect of this that could be an amusement park version of this, and allow people to continue living there but not in the way that they have built the community.

One other thing I find really interesting is the woman [in the film] who said it took nine years to learn how to think collectively, and then she teared up about it. That is really intense to me. What does it really mean to "think collectively," to change the way you think?

AUD: What's the economy there based on? How much is based on drug profits, or do people just go to the city and work and come back?

RZ: I think about 1/3 of the residents work in the city, and then 1/3 work in Christiania and about 1/3 don't work. And they make these bikes – the bikes you saw in the film, with the wheelbarrow in front of them – and everybody in Copenhagen has one, so they sell a lot of them. And tourism. They have restaurants and pubs and shops and they sell t-shirts. I don't know how much the drug trade counts – presumably it is a big part of the economy.

AUD: I saw a presentation on Brazilian squatting communities, which are not intentional communities like Christiania but are similar to it, and they are also similar to the squats here in New York. [Hunh? – ed.] In all these areas an outsider space is created in which a large illegal element can come in – which people may or may not mind. But people come in with guns, and a lot of money runs through these spaces because people use them as dealing spaces, and that creates huge revenue. And that's the impression I always got about Christiania that there is this give and take – that they don't quite want to run everyone dealing drugs out of town because the money flows back into their communities.

[Editor: I'm leaving this comment in, but it is an irresponsible generalization of the relation between underground economies and squats. There are no guns in NYC or EU squats; that would be suicidal, an invitation to murderous police attack. Still, the ways autonomous communities negotiate with drug dealing and criminalized activities are complex and diverse, and deserve attention.]

AUD: This question goes to the management of these kinds of liberated or free cities, spaces or social centers. How do you manage them in a democratic and participatory manner? One model is the Zapatista assembly which has been a big influence in the social centers. It seems that Christiania has a mode of that.

RZ: Yes, it is actually very similar to the Zapatista model of democracy. Everyone is grouped according to where they live in the area, and some of the groups are bigger than others. There are certain things they deal with on a local level, and if it can't be, they bring it to the larger group, which everyone can go to, but each area also has a representative from the smaller group. And it is all based on consensus, so if someone is really unhappy about something, they can veto it.

AUD: But it can't all be run on consensus, because [in the film] one hundred people shut down the heroin dealing. That's a minority of people living there, and the heroin dealers obviously disagreed, and they also removed people from a whole house. I mean, all the junkies living in the house, they threw them out, and while maybe this was the right decision for the community, it obviously was not done on consensus.

AUD: I don't think they threw them out. I think they were saying they threw out the dealers, who were not residents, and that forced everyone in the house into a slow withdrawal.

AUD: But it sounded like they forced everyone out of the building. Because they then redid the whole building.

RZ: I think they said: either get off the hard drugs, or leave.

AUD: But that's not consensus!

RZ: Right. Unless those people said, you're right, we agree. But it doesn't seem very likely! Now, "no[I wonder if it's worth saying here in a note that "no hard drugs"]" is one of the few hard-and-fast rules that Christiania has. So it is basically consensus, with the caveat that certain things are off the table.]

AUD: And I imagine that people who are burning their floorboards for heat are not big attenders of meetings.

RZ: It's a lot of work to go to meetings, so presumably there are people who are willing to let other people make the decisions for them.

AUD: Representative democracy is democracy of the lazy.

www.christiania.org has a downloadable history and guide of Christiania.

– transcript by Spencer Sunshine

Christiania: How They Do It & For How Long

compiled by Jordan Zinovich

Christiania's Political and Economic Structure

"A self-governing, self-sustaining community where the individual takes care of the collective."

— Jacob Ludvigsen, 1971

From its inception, Christiania committed itself to developing a self-governing society based on active participatory democracy and dedicated to the goals of individual freedom and self-fulfillment. All of Freetown's residents are entitled to participate in the democratic process on an equal footing. Within the community's boundaries an overall consensus-based structure coordinates a federation of 15 autonomous geographic areas by means of an interlinking matrix of regular meetings.

Area Meetings — Each of the 15 areas — the Loppe building, Fredens Ark, Praerien, Tinghuset, Psyak, Maelkevejen, Fabriksområdet, Løvehuset, Mølkekøtten, Nordområdet, Den Blå Karamel, Bjørnekloen, Syddyssen, Midtdyssen, and Norddyssen holds its Area Meeting once a month. The areas vary dramatically in size and population, with the largest housing more than 80 Christianites and the smallest only 9. The Area Meeting discusses area concerns, including but not limited to: building maintenance, communal work days, applications for vacant dwellings, payments of utility fees and rents, personal interactions and grievances, and more general affairs of concern to Christiania as a whole. Everyone attending the meeting is entitled to a vote.

Each area elects a Treasurer who manages the area accounts, collects area fees and rents and then transfers them to Christiania's Common Purse, presents the area's plans and requests for funds to the Common Meeting, and acts as a kind of area representative.

The House Meeting — The House Meetings are specific to Christiania's large communal dwellings. They cover issues of concern to that community group, and any disagreement that can't be resolved is referred to the appropriate Area Meeting.

The Common Meeting — Unless non-Christianites are specifically invited to attend, The Common Meeting is open only to residents of Christiania.

As a kind of parliament, The Common Meeting deals with issues of concern to all Christianites every permanent resident of Freetown is entitled to attend and has an equal vote and the right to be heard. In consultation with the areas, The Common Meeting develops and adopts the annual budget of the Common Purse, negotiates with the Danish Government, manages conflicts with the police, and decides how to implement the various consensus decisions that emerge from the collective debates. It also keeps the Freetown community informed regarding all the important issues in play at the time of each meeting.

As a kind of collective judicial body, serving as an arbitrator of last resort, The Common Meeting resolves all disputes, instances

of violence, and issues that can't be resolved at any of the other meetings. Common Meeting decisions are reached by absolute consensus, and are accepted by the community as the final word.

The Treasurers' Meeting — Once a month all 15 Treasurers meet with Christiania's Economy Group to develop the area economic plans and to discuss maintenance and housing strategy. The Economy Group provides up-to-the-minute financial information and coordinates feedback from The Common Meeting.

The Economy Meeting — The Economy Group administers Christiania's Common Purse and manages all collective common institutions and activities, including: the children's institutions, general renovation, electricity and water supply, building maintenance, community infrastructure, postal services, the information office, the health clinic, etc. The Economy Meeting takes place once a month and is open to all Christianites. Its agenda covers institutional accounts, payments from and licensing of community businesses, and applications for project and activity funding. It also maintains a running discussion of current problems, work group activities, and interactions with the nearby Christianshavn neighborhood council.

The Business Meeting — The Economy Group sponsors The Business Meeting once a month at a different business site, with the schedule rotating in turn among the businesses. The Business Meeting offers the businesses an opportunity to discuss common problems, to negotiate their payments to the Common Purse, to settle on rights of use, and to vet and endorse new businesses.

The Associates' Meeting — The Associates' Meeting is the forum central to running each of Christiania's collectively organized businesses. A particular business's Associates' Meeting is normally held once a week and concerns issues specific to that business.

The Building Meeting — The Building Meeting is held once a month and is Christiania's Technical Administration. Representatives from all 15 areas attend, as do all the people involved in running the Building Office and building-related institutions, with representative members from at least 7 areas required to form a basic voting quorum. The Building Meeting prioritizes building projects and tasks and determines the use of Building Office funds. The Building Office is funded from Christiania's Common Purse.

The Common Purse — The Common Purse was one of the first institutional instruments Christiania adopted. As the structure of the collectivity's common economy evolved, The Common Purse developed from a cigar box filled with donations to a multi-million kroner financial management strategy. Christiania pays the same municipal rates and taxes paid by other citizens of Copenhagen. It also finances its own renovation projects, all electricity and water consumption, the maintenance of its children's institutions, a

postal service, the Building Office, and the Machine Hall (which maintains the collective's mechanical equipment).

The Common Purse is funded by residential rents, a communal "subscription," meter-regulated consumption rates, payments from businesses, and a common internal VAT.

Distribution of Common Purse funds is decided at an Annual Budgetary Common Meeting. Because all decisions are consensus based, the budget meeting frequently lasts several sessions before an acceptable balance of disbursement is determined.

If funds are low, The Common Purse resorts to a carefully determined list of priorities: all taxes and external expenses are paid first, with internal institutions, projects, and area coffers dividing the remaining balance according to a predetermined distribution plan. This strategy has afforded Christianites the weird distinction of having politicians and municipal and state authorities proclaim them "model citizens" who pay all consumption rates and taxes in full and on time.

For many years The Common Purse has also maintained a separate savings account earmarked to cover unforeseen expenses and catastrophes.

In 2004, Christiania's Common Purse budget amounted to approximately 18 million Danish Kroner.

A Christiania Timeline

1969/70 – Residents of Christianshavn, a neighborhood in eastern Copenhagen, breach a fence at the corner of Princessegade and Refshalevej, invading an abandoned 85-acre naval base to construct a playground for their children.

1971 – When the Copenhagen Police demolish a flourishing nearby squat, the squatters occupy the former naval base, naming it Freetown and broadcasting a call for settlers throughout Denmark's active **Squatters' Movement**. *Hovedbladet* (*Head Magazine*) exhorts Copenhagen to "Emigrate with bus number 8." Hundreds of settlers from as far away as The New Society's Jutland camp at Thy respond – **Christiania is born**.

Police try to evict the squatters, but there are too many and the issue ends up in the Danish Parliament.

1972 – The Christianites negotiate with the Ministry of Defense and are officially designated a "**social experiment**." As part of the agreement, the government opens a competition calling for ideas for future use of the site — the "social experiment" will continue until a plan for future use is settled on.

1973 – A new right-leaning Danish government declares that Christiania must go. Christiania's theater troupe, **Solvognen (Chariot of the Sun)**, responds by crashing Copenhagen's June 1973 NATO conference with a Happening they call **Five Days for Peace**. They so successfully disrupt the conference that Christiania becomes a central player in the Danish Peace Movement. (Nils Vest's film *Five Days for Peace*, 1973, documents the events. [English-language version, 2007])

Within Christiania an overarching political structure is emerging. By consensus, different areas of the base organize into autonomous units, with The Common Meeting of all autonomous units serving as the highest authority for all residents. A base-wide "Garbage Team" institutes fundamental recycling programs, and various performance venues focus community activities.

1974 – Government-directed police harassment resumes [documented in Nils Vest's film *Lov & Orden i Christiania, 1 (Law & Order in Christiania, 1)*]. The Christianites forge the electoral pact "Valgborgs Favn" and win a seat on the municipal council for Women's List candidate Tine Schmedes. At Christmas, **Chariot of the Sun's Christmas Army** invades Copenhagen's department stores, distributing free gifts to the masses. Images of Danish police officers bludgeoning Santa Claus hit the international media.

1975 – Contention over Christiania breaks out between the City of Copenhagen and the Government of Denmark, with the Danish Parliament declaring that Freetown will be cleared of squatters by 1 April 1976. **Chariot of the Sun** responds with "**Elverhøj**," a theater piece parodying the government. With 40 sold-out performances, **Elverhøj** becomes the most successful Danish theater event of the year.

Inside Freetown, communal baths and the first children's center appear, recycling and composting programs advance, and communal shops and work shops come into being. A first **Annual Christmas Dinner** for Copenhagen's poor is instituted. (In 2008, the event served thousands of people.)

1976 – Christiania brings a "**breach of promise**" action against the Danish Government, insisting that no eviction can be legal until the terms of the 1972 agreement with the Ministry of Defense are implemented. The community is ably defended by prominent left-wing lawyer **Carl Madsen**. When a general call for support is broadcast, thousands of ordinary Danish citizens respond, mobilizing as the **rainbow army**. April 1 comes and goes and Christiania remains.

1977 – Christiania loses its case but **appeals to the Supreme Court**. A gargantuan work party cleans and repairs Freetown's infrastructure. The "**Love and Chaos**" exhibition opens at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Art, and **Our Music** appears, a CD featuring music and poetry by Christianites.

1978 – Denmark's Supreme Court **rejects Christiania's case**. In the municipal elections Christiania again wins a seat on the council. Its new representative rails publicly against property speculators and bulldozer slum clearances, and Parliament proposes a local area plan that will lead to "**normalization**."

By 1978, **hashish** and **heroin** have permeated Denmark's social fabric. Since its inception, Christiania has supported hash as its visionary vehicle of choice. Dealers on **Pusher Street** sell hash publicly and contribute to **Christiania's Common Purse**, assisting in the maintenance and improvement of community facilities.

Beginning in the late '70s, the Danish police instigate a clandestine operation to overwhelm Freetown. Junkies and other hard drug users are not prosecuted if they agree move to Christiania. Christianites house the users and provide them with medical treatment, but the influx of hard drugs alarms them. To expel the heroin dealers, they cooperate with the police in an action to clear the community of hard drugs. The **police betray Christiania's trust** by ignoring the heroin and attacking the Pusher Street hash market instead.

1979/80 – Christiania terminates its alliance with the police and institutes a "**blockade against junk**." Hard drug users are forced to

accept rehab or leave the community. Dealers are bodily ejected. **Chariot of the Sun** stages the musical “*White Castle*,” which traces the heroin economy’s connection to the arms industry.

1981 – The Danish Government employs **Møller and Grønborg**, a consulting firm, to work out a plan for future use. The consultants recommend that Christiania be allowed to develop as an **experimental city** maintaining a large degree of autonomy. The community is left to evolve in peace.

When, later in 1981, Sweden’s conservative government smears Christiania as the narcotics capital of Europe and the root of all evil, Christianites respond with a “**Love Sweden**” action, flooding the streets of Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö with parades, cabarets, and art exhibitions.

1986 – Christiania publishes “**Voilà**,” a report demonstrating how, given tax relief for its businesses, Freetown is capable of maintaining its common infrastructure and institutions.

1987 – The Danish Government appoints an intermediary management group and puts forth a plan for “**legalizing**” Christiania. The Ministry of Defense has all the chimneys and roofs renovated.

1989 – The instrumental nature of the government’s “**legalization**” and “**normalization**” rhetoric becomes clear. Overturning the group license under which they had previously operated, “**legalization**” imposes individual licenses on Freetown’s bars and performance venues. “**Normalization**” divides Christiania into “rural” and “urban” areas. The rural areas will be cleared of dwellings. The urban area may continue its social experiment.

Inside Christiania, hash dealers at the main gate are becoming aggressive. In a fit of fury, Christiania’s women **wall** up the main gate and draw a **yellow line** across Pusher Street, permanently restricting the limits of the hash market.

1990 – The Ministry of Defense appoints a Christiania Secretariat, which publishes its “**Aims and Means of Legalizing the Christiania Area**.” Recognizing the threat in the partition strategy, Christianites reply with 90 objections to the government proposal. Nils Vest releases the film *Christiania – You Have My Heart*.

1991 – As part of its **20th Anniversary Celebrations**, Christiania replies to the Ministry of Defense plan by publishing a visionary alternative Green Plan. The Green Plan proposes an ecologically sustainable urbanism with a super-efficient infrastructure in which water and usable trash are recycled, organic waste is composted, energy derives from renewable sources, and energy-efficient dwellings include houseboats on the moat and rammed earth and turf structures. As a first step, Christiania’s maintenance team renovates Freetown’s original water system, reducing waste and cost within the community. (The resident population has risen to 700, more than 200 of them children.)

1992 – The Ministry of Defense increases the rent. When the Copenhagen Council refuses to pay full housing benefits/subsidies to Freetown’s new businesses, Christiania publishes its collective budget, documents the financing of all its “public” institutions, and installs utilities-consumption meters on all businesses. The Council releases the benefits.

Responding to active outreach by Christiania, **international tourists** begin visiting the community. In September, in an attempt to clear Freetown of hash, the Copenhagen Police institutes a special 70-officer **Christiania Patrol**, which keeps the community under round-the-clock surveillance. **Violent police tactics** traumatize the Christianites, particularly the children.

1993 – Documented by the media and overseen by lawyers, **wide-spread dialogue** concerning the excessive violence opens between Christiania, the Christianshavn neighborhood, Amnesty International, the Parliamentary Justice Commission, the Christiania Secretariat, and the Copenhagen Police. The Research Institute of the Counties and Municipalities undertakes a study of Christiania, concluding that the community is exemplary and that Denmark and the world can learn from its strategies and experience. Nevertheless, the Christiania Patrol continues.

1994 – In anticipation of an upcoming **UN Copenhagen Social Summit**, the ministers of Defense and Justice declare that Christiania will be shut down if the hash market is not dealt with. Christianites respond by advocating an enlightened policy that differentiates between hard and soft drugs. Amnesty International and the Danish Nurses Association point to video documentation of illegal police violence. When Parliament reenacts its previous drug policy, Christiania conducts the world’s first “hash strike.” For five days, dealers and their customers and supporters file petitions and hold massive smoke-ins and demonstrations throughout Copenhagen. After the **world press and the Minister of Justice visit Freetown** to “observe” the phenomenon, the **Christiania Patrol is disbanded**. Christiania takes part in the UN Conference and welcomes visiting international activists.

1995 – To accommodate its increasing population of children Christiania builds the Rosinhuset (Raisin House), its fourth major children’s institution. The Ministry of Defense declares Christianites “**model citizens**” when it comes to payment for public utilities. With the establishment of www.christiania.org, Freetown becomes a virtual village.



From the FOSAJ art center, Jacmel, Haiti, 2009 (destroyed).

largest indoor skateboarding facility. Christiania Radio is active, and the Loppen Cultural Center is recognized as an important regional musical venue by the Ministry of Culture. Bob Dylan performs two sold-out concerts in Christiania's Den Grå Hal venue.

2001 – As Christiania celebrates its **30th Anniversary**, Denmark elects a right-wing government which aims at a total normalization of Freetown. The new government's redefinition of "**normalization**" insists on individual ownership of all Christiania property and the construction of 300 new dwellings, thus destroying the communal land base that sustains Freetown's collectivity. At the 30th Anniversary Party, **Chariot of the Sun** resurfaces **music and songs from Elverhøj**. Guests, friends, and supporters from all over the world gather for a week of festivities.

2003 – Copenhagen's Society for the Beautification of the Capital recognizes Christiania's long and tireless effort to create and develop alternative accommodations. Denmark's Grassroots Foundation bestows its Jubilee Prize on the Christiania Cultural Society.

In an attempt to satisfy the conditions of the 1989 agreement, the government arranges a competition calling for ideas for the future use of Christiania's land base. (No "architect of merit" enters, and the competition is deemed a failure.) In response to the obvious attack, the Christianites publish *Christiania at Work: From Vision to Reality*, and Nils Vest releases *Lov & Orden i Christiania, 2* (Law & Order in Christiania, 2), which documents the new threat of closure. The original main gate is reopened and Christiania declares an Open House. Nearly 100,000 Danes attend. The government retaliates by sending a police force to reoccupy Freetown.

2004 – According to a Gallup Poll, 75% of Copenhagen's citizens want Christiania preserved. In an effort to ensure Freetown's survival, the hash dealers remove their booths from Pusher Street. The City of Copenhagen appoints a former Freetown resident as its Special Christiania Consultant. Ignoring the gestures of solidarity, the National government transfers responsibility for Christiania from the Ministry of Defense to the Ministry of Finance.

With support from its neighbors, Christiania establishes an "embassy" in Christianshavn. A team of lawyers and activists proposes the creation of a foundation to secure Freetown's autonomy and preserve its collective rights of use and development. A petition signed by more than 100,000 Danes urges that Christiania continue as a social experiment in self-government. The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts agrees. **But the Danish government passes a law abolishing the collective**, treating its 900 members as individuals — Christiania's newest adversary becomes a bureaucratic commission from the Palaces and Properties Agency.

2005 – After Christianites stage a series of protests, the police begin to patrol Freetown 4 to 6 times daily. Each patrol consists of between 6 and 20 officers dressed for combat and sometimes accompanied by dogs. (In 2006, the number on an outdoor board recording the patrols exceeds 1000.)

2006 – The government directs that Christiania become a "mixed alternative community and residential area" and proposes that condominiums be built to house 400 new residents. Christiania rejects the directive, countering with a community-driven proposal that is awarded the **Initiative Award of the Society for the Beautification of Copenhagen**. Its sustainability goals and democratic process

receive endorsement from the municipality of Copenhagen and the Agenda 21 Society.

2007 – Incorporating material from the Christiania plan, a negotiating group assembled by Copenhagen's **mayor proposes a deal**. A few newer structures will be razed to restore the Bastion ramparts to their original 17th century condition. The government will then sell the rest of Christiania at below market rate to the philanthropic investor/developer RealDania, which will lease the properties at far-below-market rates to Christiania's residents via a housing foundation on whose board Christianites will have the majority vote. The new Freetown will be managed by two "sister" nonprofits, with one controlling commercial, cultural, and social institutions, and the other managing 24,000 square meters of new construction that RealDania will finance and design as an experimental "laboratory" for green architecture and engineering. **Christianites balk** at the loss of their collective land base.

2008 – The Palaces and Properties Agency loses patience and petitions the Danish High Court for permission to evict Christiania. When police remove an "illegal structure," the Christianites riot. Using the common law right to "property by adverse possession," Christiania petitions the Danish High Court to regain control over its affairs.

2009 – Denmark's Eastern High Court affirms that the government can clear Christiania.

Despite all the legal distractions, members of Chariot of the Sun manage to organize the **Climate Bottom Meeting: Windows of Hope** as an alternative to the 2009 Copenhagen Climate Summit (COP15). (See: climatebottom.dk/en)

For a clear assessment of Christiania's current political situation, read Charles Hayes "Can Christiania Survive? A countercultural enclave in Denmark fights for its life," in Reason Magazine, March 2009; online at reason.com/archives

Compiled by Jordan Zinovich from the Christiania Guide, The Copenhagen Post online, IceNews, reason.com, and Wikipedia, and with input from conversations with Christianites Britta Lillasøe, Nils Vest, and Frants Pandal. For Radical Urbanism 2009, at The Center for Place, Culture & Politics, CUNY Graduate Center, 10 December 2009.

Scandinavian bulletins...

compiled from icop15 -- aggregating radical news about Copenhagen

Hacklab and social center in Malmö raided

by indymedia Indymediadk from Indymedia.dk features in free space hacklab police raid Repression on 02 Dec

At 20.45 on Saturday the 28th of November the police raided the social centre Utkanten in Malmö, where the hackerspace Forskningsavdelningen is housed. Twenty officers in full riot gear and ski masks broke into the space through the entrance and a

backdoor, using crowbars. Shortly thereafter twenty to thirty more showed up, mostly dressed as civilians and some of them IT technicians from Länskriminalen (county police), who are suspected to be interested in the hackerspace. They stayed in the building for about six hours. Watch video... [Original posting: indymedia.dk/articles/1387]

Anarchist counter-cultural festival in Tampere, Finland, 10.-12. July 2009

[from takku.net]

The 4th Musta Pispala will offer practical and theoretical workshops, parties, sauna, book fair and children's activities in the unique setting of Pispala....

This might be something strange, cause even thought the left alternative scene is full of verbal internationalism but in reality there is not much exchange going on among the supposedly networking left. I would want to make a workshop on this festival to provide some basic information on the Budapest scene in general and to talk about the recent history of the Centrum Group which was the only politically conscious squatting group in the current decade in Budapest. I have two short films about this group aswell (about two public squatting actions in 2004 and 2005 in total not more than 30 minutes footage). Also i would like to make it open in a way that i would not really want to give a strict lecture, so i can talk about the hungarian/eastern european political situation in general, my experiences with movements/social struggles and whatever the people attending would want to hear. Unfortunately i dont speak finnish so the working language would be english and i hope we will be anarchist enough to organize translation spontaneously if needed....

Pispala is a perfect example of the corruption of hierarchical systems such as representative democracy and at the other hand the potentialities of peoples co-operation. The area is booming with self-organised activities such as the Rajaportti Sauna, the oldest public sauna in Finland, Vastavirta club, which is owned by a punk-co-operative, Hirvitalo which is home to the Center of Contemporary Art,

Kurpitsatalo (The Pumpkin House), home of the community garden movement in the middle of the plots, and the communally self-organised library in the neighbour of Hirvitalo, which has been independently kept alive after the council closed the local branch of the city library. Currently the city council wants to sell Kurpitsatalo and Rajaportti, which they own, effectively destroying them as they are at the moment. Additionally they are planning to give a building permit for houses to be build over the community garden plots. This would obviously be one of the stupidest things possible concerning the current situation – climate change, peak oil, the need for localised food self-sufficiency etc. For capitalists and their lackeys in the city council short term monetary profits seem to be more important than anything, including the survival of humanity.

Pispala has also been an area of strong gentrification despite the strongest special legislation in Finland to preserve the unique historic spirit of the area. Rich bastards with friends in high places have managed to build outrageous mansions, wiping out many nice wooden houses with cheap apartments. Many owners leave their houses to rot hoping to get a permit for de-constructing them later and so get a permit for a new house. In this situation they could sell the plot with a high price to some yuppie.

There have also been quite a few squats in Pispala, currently there is one in Hyhky, Pispalan valtatie 72. 2 kommentti(a)



Picture the Homeless Goes to Budapest

by Rob Robinson

Since the fall of communism in 1990 and the rise of capitalism, Hungary has suffered from high unemployment and homelessness. Social housing, known in the US as public housing, was tied to employment. Once communism fell, factories closed and people lost their housing. Many became homeless. We met a lot of people during our trip who have been homeless since 1990.

In the summer of '09, the NYC-based group Picture the Homeless took its brand of organizing international. Organizers from Picture the Homeless were invited to Hungary by two students, Eva Tessza Udvarhelyi and Balint Misetics, who had studied in the U.S. and followed our organization for some time. Our 17-day excursion began with a visit to the largest homeless shelter in Budapest. There we met with homeless people using a drop-in center, which works like those in the U.S.. A drop-in center is a place where folks can go to get a meal, take a shower and basically get some short-term rest, maybe two or three hours. We met with well-meaning and hard-working social workers, and shared experiences and frustrations which in so many ways were similar in both countries.

Our first public event was a discussion on the issues of homelessness in the U.S., and the methods used by Picture the Homeless to change policies that negatively affect homeless people. We were interviewed by Hungary's national newspaper, and the next day a page six headline read "The Americans are Coming": they will teach Hungary how to end homelessness. While we were met with some sarcasm and cynicism, for the most part the homeless populations of Budapest, the city of Szeged, and a Roma community called Sajókaza welcomed us and received us warmly. Sajókaza is a two hour drive north, northwest of Budapest. Roma people in Hungary and throughout most of Europe [called "gypsies"] suffer from discrimination much like blacks have in America for so many years.

One of the most inspirational parts of our trip was a visit to Sherwood Forest. The Forest people have named their community "Sherwood" after the legend of Robin Hood, the folk hero who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. These folks have lived near a suburb of Budapest for more than six years. It's a real community.



The folks in Sherwood Forest made me a cane with a first aid kit attached, a bell and a bottle to hold spirits.



They cooked dinner for us. We heard from them about Sherwood, how they ran their space.

There was a degree of freedom and autonomy in Sherwood that I don't believe exists in the shelters and drop-in day centers. The homeless that stay in those institutions we visited rarely made eye contact, and felt really uncomfortable with us taking pictures of them and the space in which they lived. The feeling in Sherwood was very different. People in Sherwood had a degree of pride that we didn't see in the places that were run by the state. This space was inter-generational, with youth, adults and elders all sharing it together. They even had pet dogs that ate the scraps of food that we didn't eat. It was probably the most inspirational part of our trip.

All in all, the Budapest trip turned out to be one of the most rewarding experiences of my life and of my time with Picture the Homeless. We keep in touch with all the folks we met. They have organized a homeless group and have asked us for documents on structure such as by-laws and governance. They have been active in protests and civil disobedience, and have been somewhat successful at having discussions with elected officials on policy changes. I hope to return in the summer of 2010.

Rob Robinson is a board member and Housing Campaign leader for the NYC-based group Picture the Homeless.

The world can get better day by day

Two separate continents, two cities, different cultural and historical backgrounds. Still, human fates are very similar, as are problems and their possible solutions. Learning from each other, sharing experiences, and drawing-up workplans that help us win and fulfill our ambitions are very important. The visit to Budapest by members of Picture the Homeless must bring something new and better in the field of grassroots cooperation, as well as in the public perception of homeless people.

Despite the fact that this workshop only lasted three days, it made us acquire broad and thorough knowledge and experiences, through personal examples and the discussion of working strategies.

They revealed the fact that we have human and civil rights too, and standing up for them is not only an option but vitally important, because no one will if we don't.

I want to thank our American friends for everything they have done here in Budapest. The rest is up to us now. They taught us and showed us examples -- that we may and must act, and that the world can get better day by day.

– Laci, homeless from Budapest, August 11 2009



Top: Jean Rice of PtH and Chino Garcia of CHARAS (an OSC evicted in 1999) hanging out at an occupation in East Harlem, July 2009.

Right: The East Harlem “tent city,” built by Brooklyn activist artists Not an Alternative.

Bottom: Not an Alternative sign campaign for an earlier PtH occupation mimics the look of official signs.



Report from Squatting in Budapest with AK57 (2005)

- *Abolishing Borders from Below* abb.hardcore.lt

Already over half a year ago the first attempt of political squatting in Budapest since years started. Even though the house was evicted after only 2 weeks and this without any big resistance from the inhabitants (surely due to their lack of experience) we feel that it was a very important step. Also some of the squatters got "infected" by the spirit of communal living and acting, so they went on with a legal house/center project: AK 57. We hope that this project will go on and others (also new squats) will emerge.

On Friday the 30th of October 2004, squatters occupied the Centrum, formerly the Uttoro Aruhaz (pioneer shopping mall), a vast former supermarket in the centre of Budapest. Teams of people connected water and power, built kitchens and lounge rooms, and redecorated walls that were covered in 1980s porn with art, posters, and slogans in Hungarian, English, Spanish and Italian. An exhibition of found objects from the space includes transparencies of communist propaganda and ancient safety messages. Days of cleaning were followed by evenings of intense discussion. Within a week the space was converted into an infoshop, cafe, cinema, gallery, freeshop, library and residence. The building has been here since the end of the 19th century and was a supermarket from that time until 2001, since then it has been empty. Budapest squatters are, in part, campaigning for their right to housing. There are many abandoned buildings in Budapest and 30,000 people are homeless; with winter approaching the lack of housing is life-threatening. In addition the squatters are working to create a social and cultural space and a place to organise established projects such as food not bombs, indymedia, and other cultural and political collectives. Centrum squat opened its doors to the public on Sunday, 7 November with a cafe, music performance, and screening of films about squatting and the history of Budapest as well as exhibitions about the building and other vacant properties. With a warm reception from neighbours and the community, the occupiers had high hopes of staying in the space. Many representatives of mainstream and independent media were invited to the opening and the squatters made the nightly news and front-page news in both major Budapest newspapers with very positive stories about the opening of a much needed cultural centre....

Our squat was evicted in two weeks. On one hand it's a shame that we didn't manage to fight against the will of the property owner, or/ and against the police, but on the other hand this was our first try, we've learned a lot, and fallen in love with community life, anarchism in practice. Now we run a place called AK57. Actually it's a legal place, but the mentality is squat mentality. Some of us live here, many others use it for their programs, activities, meeting point and so on. When we started we planned to make a place like a "headquarters" for the squat movement, but we didn't succeed.

Budapest is a shitty place and we need plenty of work to make work it better.

AK 57: indymedia.hu/foglalthaz // ak57@indymedia.hu// 1074 Budapest //

Dohány utca 57

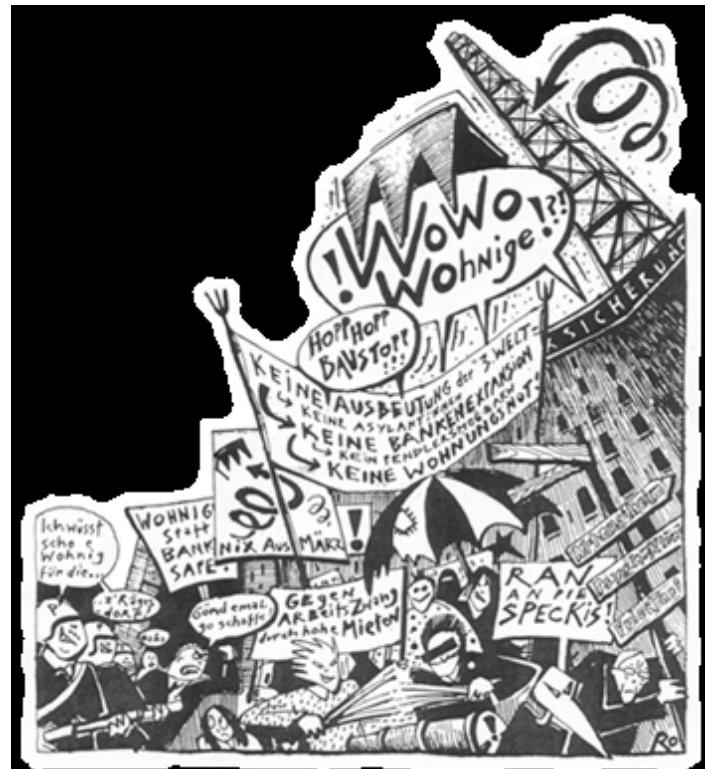


Image from the book "Wo-Wo-Wonige!" concerning the movement in Zurich after 1968 -- info (in German) at wonige.ch/home.html

May 2008

Did you miss the squat movement in Berlin in the 90s? Don't worry, as part of Hungary's retro revival, some courts managed to survive the aggressive expansion of horrible property development projects in the historical city center.

Szimpla Kertmozi is a partly open-air movie theater, today mostly frequented by university students and other intellectuals. It is located in the neighborhood of the former Jewish ghetto. As a middle-class area during the pre-WW2 era, despite the house demolitions, the area is still reserving some of its old nostalgic charm.

Click below for an image of the entrance so you recognize it from outside.

<http://budapestdailyreview.com/dailyphotos/architecture/budapest-squat/>

The Story of Villa Milada...

One of the best known and longest existing czech squat, began 1st May 1998, when was squatted by group of people evicted from another building. Milada is situated in Holešovice district in Prague, north of the city center, near a river. On the place it stands was old villa quarter, which had to fall back on account of new colleges project planned in „communist“ regime. But from the college project are finally realized only three high-rised buildings. Milada also had to be demolished, but finally it was only deleted from the cadastre. Demolition never happened and since the time, Milada didn't exist in documents. Squatters wanted to make an agreement with Institute for informations in education, the administrator of Milada and surrounding land, all the time, but despite this, unsuccesfull attempt to evict the squat followed soon. Eviction was unsuccesfull, also thanks to support of college students. In Milada took place concerts, annual Resistance feast (reminder of eviction attempt), Food Not Bombs cooking, projections....

In 2003, a large part of squatters left the house after disagreement and four years of activity decline followed, house served primary only for habitation. In 2007 was unsuccesfull tryout to squat a house in the Prague periphery. Squatters, who had idea to build an independent space with clear political direction, turned to Milada, where they decided to stay and revitalize it again. Since then, new collective organized, and helped to happen, hundreds of miscellaneous events: in addition to concerts of many music styles also projections with freegan dinners, poetry reading, theater performances, DIY screen printing and other workshops, discussions, thematic benefit parties, fireshow.... It was not only about magnificent actions like celebration of International Women's day „Toys for boys“ (an exhibition of paintings, theater, projection, squatters fashion parade, gig), Radical graffiti jam or week lasting anniversary of 10 and 11 year of existence. Milada was been valuable because it was a free space where anything was possible. Milada was place for meeting people and space for learning.... Place where we could do benefit concert if somebody got into hard situation, where bands, which haven't money, could practice, where we cooked for homeless people, where we met lots of interesting and inspiring people, where we realized ourselves, felt free....

30th june 2009 squat Milada was evicted by private security group hired by Institute for informations in education. Since this day, Milada is posted into the cadastre again, legally it is again existing house. Police assisted the eviction and didn't intervened when security employees (lot of them were monitored nazis) were throwing furniture, computers and other stuff from windows, even when they endangered lifes of squatters on the roof, police just covered them. Before the eviction nobody told squatters to leave. After discussion with last squatters on the roof, when the house was already destroyed, cabinet minister for minorities promised to find new substitute space. Now, three flats and cellar in apartment house in centre of Prague (Truhlářská 11), which offered



private businessman connected to this minister, are provisory place. Squatters accepted to use this space as a centre for further actions. Soon appeared information, that squatters have to force neighbours to leave. After the emigration of last apartments in the house, which should ensure the squatter, the house would be converted into a hotel. Squatters immediately started to communicate with neighbours, who were scared by negative media campaign. Now, we have good relations with our neighbours, they see we are friendly, active and thinking people – the opposite image that is presented by mass media. Squatters also didn't want to live here, but use the room just for an action basement – now e.g. as place for cooking and meeting, infoshop, gallery, theatre, gym, storage and multifunction room.

- from the website of the Prague squat Milada:
milada.org/zpravodajstvi/squaterstvi-je-verejne-prospesna-prace-ne-zlocin.php#more-605
- Czech to English translation by Google; English semi-cleaned up.

Rozbrat squat in Poznan, Poland

Since the beginning of the 1990s groups of Poznan freedom movement wanted to have their own premises. During that very active period, the freedom movement took part in many initiatives which aim was to socialise goods. Successes of groups in other towns were encouraging them to act.

In the summer of 1994, not minding the consent of authorities or owners, activists decisively started to look for premises. Several buildings were found, but the most appropriate one was the barrack of the bankrupted warehouse. It was situated in an deserted area that used to be a warehouse-industrial complex.

Initially, squat Rozbrat's role was a house similar to freedom communes. Some more serious actions that were creating and supporting the squat took place. In summer 1995, it was still being adapted. On one hand, it had only a residential function, on the other hand almost every resident of the squat was somehow active in social activity.

With time, concerts started to be organised at Rozbrat. Because of safety reasons, the entrance was allowed only with an invitation, but they were organised more and more frequently, and the character of those concerts started to be more open. This kind of cultural activity was the leading one for several years. A bigger room was adapted and prepared, sound equipment was collected. Slowly, the character of the place started to change and it became an independent culture centre.

After the activities were created in a closed group a time for creating a wide coalition for sustaining and keeping the squat has come. Squat started to be treated not as a whole, but as a part of activity. A wider bunch of people not living at the squat started to get involved in Rozbrat, laying the foundations of new quality of the Rozbrat Collective.

In 1997 Anarchist Federation started their activity at Rozbrat. Since then, it has gathered the more active participants of Rozbrat Collective and plays very important role in shaping the place, both in the ideological way and in material one. Meetings called the Liberation Feasts were initially a forum for both solving the problems of Rozbrat itself and the outer activity. The Anarchist Federation created the Anarchist Library in 1997, and in 2000 the Anarchist Club, where weekly meetings of AF still take place. In 2001 another room was adapted for initiative "Lame Mule" (Polish: Kulawy Mul), where recitals, poetry evenings, discos and lectures take place. The back of "Lame Mule" was transformed into the Gallery, that is open for all kinds of independent artists. With time, a technical structure and a management system based on self-governance was being created. In 2005, a new cafe bar next to the Gallery was created, it is a chillout zone. All the time, we are creating and improving the infrastructure. With small steps we are developing the place engaging ourselves in it.

Rozbrat is a peculiar centre of independent culture in Poznan, and actually, in whole Wielkopolska region. Actions that are taken here would be very difficult to be taken in a commercialised world. We are creating a place based on independent social and cultural activity: without donations, subsidies, sponsors, outside of the system, outside of the good or bad economic situation, for ourselves, for propagating an independent thought, for building social consciousness.



That is how Rozbrat has changed its side and blended well into Poznan's surrounding, for some people it has been a nice accent, for others being a thorn in their side. The outside-of-institutions character of the place was attracting and still attracts people wanting to create culture in an active and independent way, and also undertaking others actions on social-political level.

Rozbrat - The idea: Free houses for free people.

Squat is nothing but an uninhabited building, usually in a very poor shape, being occupied by a group of people who repair it, move in and create a certain kind of community. Therefore squat becomes home to them.

From the community...

The original idea of Rozbrat was to set up a commune composed of the people who did not approve of the world based on "the rat race". Then it has evolved and developed: the place itself was changing, different people got involved in the formation. The goal has broadened from residing to carrying on cultural, social and political work.

The group, initially small, has grown larger becoming kind of "open community" with the aim to keep the place and build free ideas upon it.

...to revolution

Today Rozbrat is the center of the alternative culture both for Poznan and the whole region called the Wielkopolska. This is the social space where the activities, which would not have happened in the commercialized world, do take place. Everything here is based upon the independent social and cultural activity: we don't get any donations, subsidies, we are not sponsored by anybody, we are out of the establishment and shady relations; we do it for ourselves and to spread the free, independent thought and raise social awareness....

at: rozbrat.org/our-activity/157-rozbrat-squat

Greek & UK Bulletins

Merry Crisis & a Happy New Fear...

#162 | Saturday, January 2, 2010

Anarchists called for a gathering outside the prisons at the time of the change of the year. This is a gathering that happens every New Year's Eve the last five years. About 200 people took place in this event outside the largest prison of the country (Korydallos, Athens). They didn't stop shouting slogans and used some firework. The prisoners from inside answered to the slogans. Also anarchists gathered outside the prisons of Volos (Central Greece) and Alikarnassos (Crete).

The main slogans were "Freedom to all that are in the prisons", "Neither political nor penal, explosives and fire to every prison", "The passion for freedom is stronger than any of your prisons" and many more.

#137 | Thirteen people have been arrested at anarchist space in Athens; open assembly at the Polytechnic, 7pm tonight, Saturday, December 5, 2009

Cops just stormed Exarcheia square, detaining about 20 people, without anything having happened before. There are also riot cops ready to kick off on the corner of Messologiou and Metaxa Street, literally a few meters away from the point of Alexis' assassination.

Polytechnic assembly is starting soon.

Riot police have stormed the anarchist space Resalto in Western Athens. They smashed the building's glass facade and arrested thirteen people, driving them all to the Police Headquarters in Alexandras Avenue.

For all the internationals who have made their way to Athens:

1) Welcome!...

DO NOT:

- have any patches on clothing or bags (political or band)
- carry any form of political agit prop, including stickers on wallets or antifascist donor cards
- don't keep clothes in zip lock bags till you have to
- go off the beaten track in any area that is regarded as "political" unless you mean to and know exactly where you're going.
- chat in english about your favourite riot porn or the latest post on occupied london

DO:

- DRESS LIKE A TOURIST: anarcho-chic is not going to make you any friends
- have your passport on you if you're just out for a walk in town, you can get in to more trouble without it.

— www.occupiedlondon.org/blog/

Priests and Chainsaws Revisited

LONDON: At 5am on Thursday, 15th October, 2009, the rampART Creative Centre and Social Space was evicted by 45 police with chainsaws and, remarkably, a Church of England vicar. Three people and a dog were inside.

The eviction marks the end of nearly five and a half years of occupation, during which rampART has served as a landmark for the social centres movement in London and a venue for a diverse range of events including political meetings, workshops, info cafes, fundraising parties and the London Freeschool.

The eviction, significantly, happened on the same day that Non Commercial House, a freeshop operating out of a building in nearby Commercial Street, lost their case against eviction and a week after the collective occupying 2a Belgrave Road in Stoke Newington successfully defended the space from eviction by council bailiffs.

This may be a coincidence, but with the London Olympics less than three years away and in a time of crisis for a city that depends on financial services and tourism, it isn't difficult to come to the conclusion that squatted properties are being targeted in a concerted scouring of the city, setting an example so others dare not even try.

Social centres are important and not only because they provide space for political organising, D-I-Y culture and free education outside of the institutional constraints that are increasingly limiting free expression and the development of cultural alternatives. Squatting draws attention both to the dimensions of homelessness in one of the world's richest cities, and the consequences of rampant property speculation (in 2008, there were 100,000 empty homes in London). It also draws attention to the lack of facilities where people with a diversity of interests can meet and socialise without paying exorbitant prices and contributing to capitalist expansion, or fitting into paternalistic, box-ticking government agendas. More importantly perhaps, the occupation of commercial and government owned premises blocks the flow of capital which homogenises cities and their populations.

The free spaces of the city are increasingly few and increasingly under siege. This is why it is vital that we continue to organise and exploit the empty properties which the current recession has made available. rampART was sited in a part of London which has witnessed a history of struggle for autonomous expression and the rights of workers and exploited minorities. At a time when global capitalist expansion and the rise of neo-liberal ideology has destroyed the lives of many peoples around the world, it is essential that that struggle continues.

rampART was not just a building but a convergence of committed individuals and groups willing to give their time and energy to creatively demonstrating that it is possible to effect change. That

energy has not dissipated. We will not be beaten. rampART is dead. Long live rampART.

To get involved and help us with the next steps, email rampart@mutualaid.org.

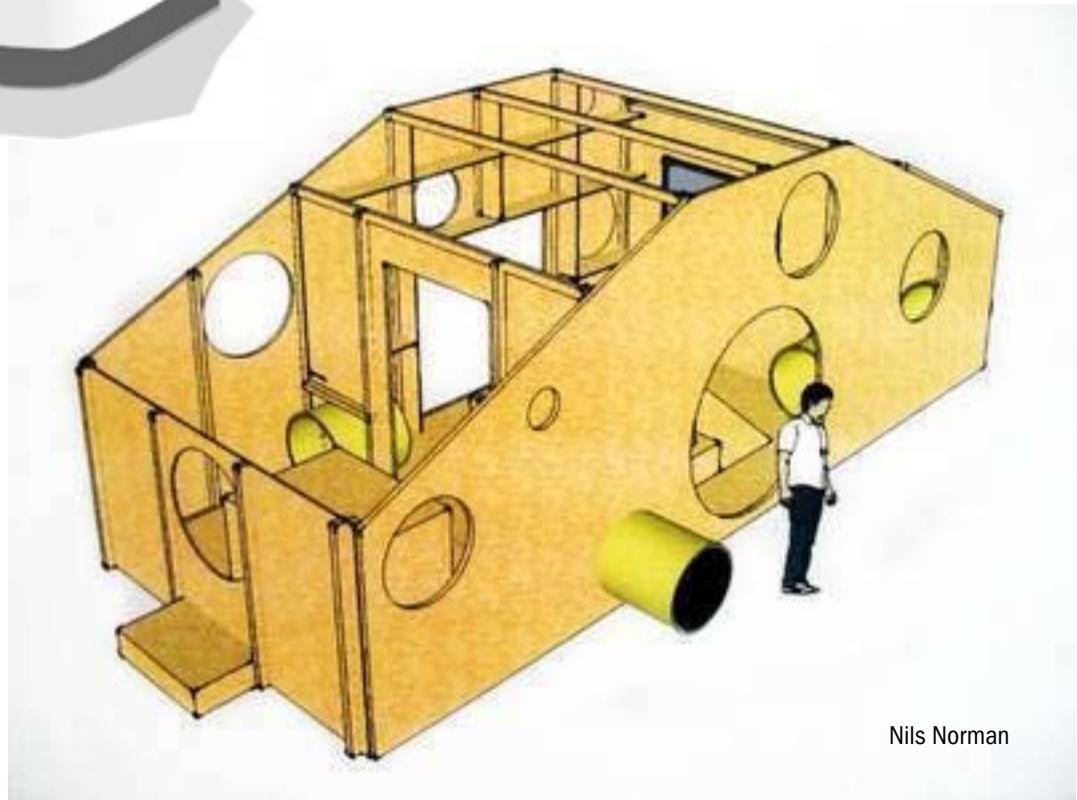
Rampart has moved to the Lift n' Hoist in Walworth

Following the eviction of Rampart [OSC in London], the collective has now moved to the Lift n' Hoist at 1 Queens Row in Walworth SE17

Our website is now at liftnhoist.ucrony.net



Baby Rampart



SQEK: Squatting Europe Research Agenda

Squatting Europe is a research network focusing on the squatters' movement. Our aim is to produce reliable and fine-grained knowledge about this movement. Critical engagement, transdisciplinarity and comparative approaches are the bases of our project. The group is an open transnational collective (SQEK: SQuatting Europe Kollektive) whose members represent a diversity of disciplines and fields of interest seeking to understand the issues associated with squats and social centres across the European Union.

Why squatting?

While homelessness is escalating worldwide, the production of empty spaces is becoming a regular feature of contemporary society. As states and markets failed to fulfil their allocated function, buildings sit empty while homelessness has been increasing across Europe and the world. In this time of crisis, people who have decided to take matters into their own hands are squatting a diversity of spaces: office blocks, factories, abandoned theatres, public houses (UK) and bars, as well as houses. In the process, the concept of urban development and renewal, i.e. urban and housing politics and spatial adjustment is re-interpreted and detoured. Indeed, squatting is not just a way to satisfy the need for housing and to express the rarity of spaces of sociability, but it is also an attempt to practice non-hierarchical and participatory organization models. Squats often offer an alternative mode of envisioning social relationships and political practices and developing collective activities such as countercultural events, and critical and radical political meetings outside of, and in antagonism with, commercial circuits. Social centre activists and squatters are thus often engaged in broader protest campaigns and social movements, fighting against precariousness, urban speculation, racism, neo-fascism, militarization, war, and for housing, migrants' rights and income etc.

The existence of vacant buildings once designed to house the production of multinational capital in the metropolis not only belies the neutrality of market forces but also stands as an accusation to neo-liberal home ownership ideology. Yet, in spite of the evidence of its social contributions to the urban global crisis, many scholars and politicians still consider the squatters' movement marginal.

The rhetoric of economic recovery reflects the vacancy of current political debate. Politicians call for social cohesion and self-responsibility. However, when people actually take these values seriously, they are often treated as criminals who undermine social integration. Academic responses to the current crisis have been just as vacant. While many researchers are struggling with the neo-liberal attack on public universities and seem only interested in getting funding from private companies and in the production of market-oriented information, others seem more interested in theorizing the problem than addressing it. Yet, social movements and urban

problems are demanding a much more socially committed production and distribution of knowledge. Accordingly, SQEK will seek to critically analyse the squatters' movement in its relevant contexts (historical, cultural, spatial, political, and economic), and share the knowledge thus produced with activists and society.

Different approaches and common issues

SQEK was born as a research network. When we began to meet through an email list, our initial first intention was to cooperate in order to start a comparative research on squatting in the cities of Europe. On January 2009, we held our first meeting in Madrid. This meeting allowed us to share our different experiences, intellectual concerns, research topics and plans for future involvement. As new members joined our network, in October 2009, we held our second meeting Milan, where we had the opportunity to present and discuss case studies.

Self-funded research in different countries, internal meetings of the research group and public events are, at present, our main activities. Diverse methods of research and theoretical frames are also remarkable aspects of our methodology. Nonetheless, we expect to publish collective books in several languages, articles and special editions of academic journals, in order to amplify the results of our research and debates. If possible, a common research project will be written in the following months as a way of better structuring our work.

Why is squatting important? Though it may not be seen as a very powerful movement, its decades-long local and international dimensions are frequently forgotten. Stressing its political dimension, many activists from European cities have shown a rich experience of collective organization, action and protest that deserves careful attention.

Therefore, we are aware of the need to articulate a local-specific approach to an international and comparative perspective. While English is our instrumental language of communication, we appreciate the fact that we are engaged in a multilingual, complex and diverse field.

Lot of time is usually spent discussing what a "squat" is. But in the end as squat is what squatters make it to be (they are not the only ones of course, all kinds of other actors, narratives and apparatuses are involved). What constitutes a squatter? Is it what s/he does or the subjectivity (and narratives) s/he deploys and performs (and shapes) in the course of her/his activities. Or what? With this in mind we have developed a preliminary research agenda structured around five major axes, which seek to address the phenomenon in its full complexity, while maximizing the diverse approaches and disciplinary orientations (in terms of method and theoretical frameworks) of our members:

- 1) Long and medium term structural factors that make squatting possible.
 - Historical perspective on squatting (since WW2)
 - Housing policies and underlying ideologies
 - Urban spaces, urban development and/or renewal, and patterns of ownership.
 - Role of SC in post-welfare state policies
 - Spatial transformation influenced by squatters
 - 2) Analysis of “conflicts” and “dynamics.”
 - Processes of mobilization and political radicalization; local relationships with neighborhoods
 - Which squatting experiences were most successful and why?
 - How do squatters use the ‘construction of social needs’ as a claim to develop their projects; Political trends and practices in SC and squats.
 - How do social and political actors recognise and legitimise squatting?
 - Processes of Repression/criminalization or negotiation.
 - 3) SC/Squats’ networks, politics and culture
 - Trans/local connections between SC and squatted houses
 - Trans/national connections. Political coordination: SC/ squats, political parties and alterglobal movements
 - Collective actions and public expression (demonstrations, media, etc.)
 - Squatters as producers of knowledge and cultural innovators (alternative media, etc.)
- 4) Empirical case-studies.
 - Formal and informal ways of organization; decision-making processes
 - Economic dimension of SC and role as providers of income
 - Self-knowledge (reflexivity) and internal contradictions (inter-generational relations and activists’ memory, gender conflicts and homophobia, etc.)
 - Class composition and subjectivities within SC
 - Post-class social identities (precarious workers, queers, etc.)
 - 5) Squatting in comparative perspective.
 - Map & Database (or Census) recording all the experiences of squatting at each country
 - Public opinion survey on squatting and housing policies.
 - Size and volume of squatting in each country
 - Ideological controversies and orientations within SC movement across the EU
 - Legal frameworks, their change over time and across countries.

This list of questions were suggested for current and future research activities.

As has been already mentioned, SQEK is not only a group of scholars but a socially committed group as well. Thus, we are available as a public resource. We want to engage in public debates about squatting, would welcome meetings with activists and would gladly be active participants in their public initiatives. We are also ready to offer our advice to students and young researchers who are interested in this field.

Furthermore, in view of the diverse composition of our network we seek to challenge the traditional dichotomy between researchers and their subjects/objects of knowledge. Whenever possible, our research practices will thus favour a collaborative and dialogical approach to knowledge production in the belief that social movement activists, just as any other social actor, are themselves producers of knowledge. Consequently, we are not sure activists and academics are necessarily irreconcilable categories. Obviously they are irreconcilable if considered as identity “positions”. Things get a little muddled if we take the angle of the life-course of concrete individuals. One case in point is the composition of our research group. All of us (whatever our differences) are activists and the majority are full-time researchers. We are aware of the difficulty in reconciling the two positions, a difficulty has a lot to do with embedded (and embodied) structures of power. While we believe that this issue is worthy of investigation in our project, we are also aware that problematizing our research persona commendable as it is, in our case runs the risk of essentializing our activist one. How should we try to challenge such (an apparently) neat distinction? How can these tensions be productively explored? In more general

terms, what constitutes the “activist” activity as active as opposed to what other social actors (don’t) do, is it their “passivity”? In what sense are they “passive” actors? We are an open network and we would welcome participation, suggestions, contributions and collaboration to tackle such questions and investigating the research agenda we are proposing.

Best way to contact us is by email to:
squattingeurope@listas.nodo50.org

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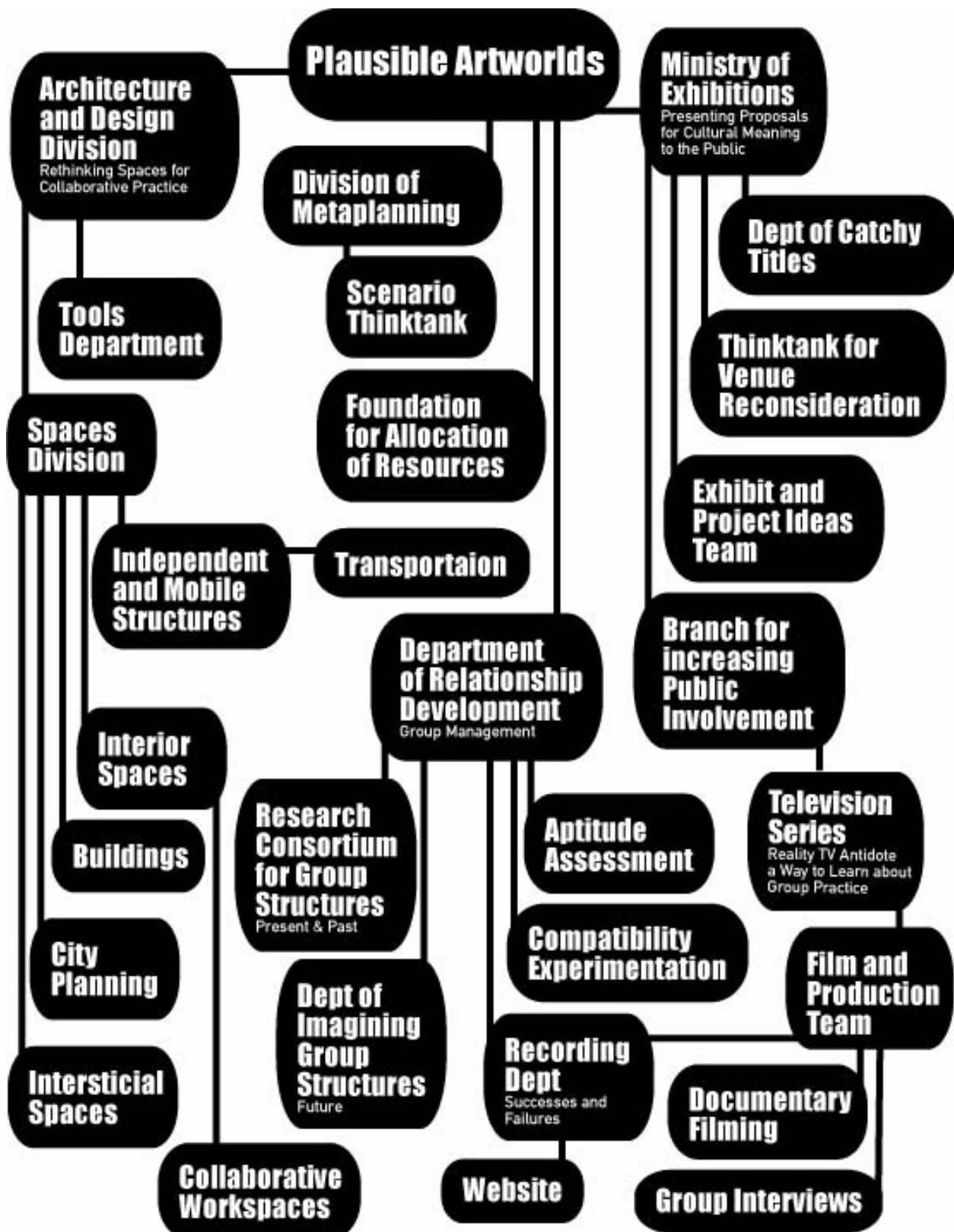


Chart for Plausible Art Worlds, Basekamp, Philadelphia

Real-time action

ANDRÉ MESQUITA

On the 4th of July, 1979, one of the main Brazilian newspapers carried the news of an intervention conducted by an art collective known as 3Nós3.¹ They symbolically shut down some of the galleries in the city of São Paulo. After sealing the spaces in the early hours of the morning with an "X" made out of masking tape, 3Nós3 finished the action by sticking a small bill on the doors, with a note saying "what is inside remains; what is outside grows".

The X-Galeria action defended the creation of a new poetic territory, removed from the official art circuit, while other collectives working in the city in the 1980s, such as Manga Rosa, d'Magrelos, TutiNãoDá, GEXTU and Viajou Sem Passaporte, occupied, with their performances, games, graffiti and interventions, the gaps in life and urban space "left by the oppression of the Brazilian military dictatorship in order to facilitate the easing of relations"². In the 1990s, a new chapter of collective experimentation began in the country, in part conducted by groups which sought unlimited artistic independence with regard to the conformation of the existing art system³, but also as a movement structured, in tactical and strategic terms, around the possibilities provided by the open architecture of the network via the internet, as well as being driven by their cooperative enthusiasm for aesthetic creation combined with the new political struggles.

Whether ephemeral, precarious, poetic or activist, the recent developments in Brazilian art collectives have yielded a variety of results. What is "outside" the art world has gained a sense of an "expanded world", and its real-time effects on the urban fabric, on the media and on specific situations created by groups of artists working

within social movements, guide our perceptions toward at least two questions: what are the consequences of these processes? What other social spaces can be imagined from now on? From the poetic to the political, we will now present a brief summary of some of the proposals.

Ephemeral guerrilla

Some of the main strategies used by Brazilian collectives are proposals which play with the ephemeral. The term "art guerrilla", employed by Frederico Morais to describe the anti-art produced by Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica⁴, creators of situations which must be lived, expressing a powerful precariousness in their aesthetics and viewing art as an "ambush" founded on everyday interventions where everyone can suggest initiatives, has been reinterpreted in new and contemporary contexts, by means of projects such as *Cama*, by the Grupo de Interferência Ambiental (GIA), and *Jardim*, by the Poro group. While one of the members of the GIA rests on a bed in the street to produce a poetic interference which temporarily eliminates the normal conditions of the to and fro and senses of passers-by, encouraging them to reflect on urban life, *Jardim* uses red cellophane flowers "planted" in abandoned flowerpots in the city of Belo Horizonte to draw attention to the sparse attention paid to these spaces on the part of the authorities. With this sort of subtle actions, the groups proposes a "temporary and silent delocalization of the gaze, working with the improbable".

For collectives, the social sphere is an unusual space which

stimulates the spontaneity of critical encounters and comments. To celebrate the second anniversary of an exhibition, in April, 2004, the Laranjas group organised a party at a bus stop in Porto Alegre, with gramophones, records, friends and passers-by. Open to the inclusion of others' thoughts, the "Laranja actions" created sensitive connections between social implications, affectivity networks and gratuitousness. However, some of the subtle elements used by Brazilian collectives also take the form of political demonstrations. Since 2002, on every second Sunday in December, the Projeto de Arte Entorno, formed by artists from the Federal District, has carried out the *Lavado de la Plaza de Três Poderes*. With buckets, soap and brooms the members of the collective and other participants clean the country's centre of power. Although the first "cleaning" was devised as a ritual to welcome Lula's government, the Entorno continues carrying out these actions because, as one of the collective's members, Clarissa Borges, points out, "it will always be necessary to keep the house clean or to find new sources of dirt", and concludes "If the day ever comes when people feel that there is no need to clean, that we are happy with the country we have, then that's where I'll think there is a stain".

Zone of Arid Poetry

In São Paulo, art collectives have been increasingly inspired by new forms of creative dissent. The hybridising between art and activism, the equation at the centre of actions by groups such as BijaRi, Catadores de Histórias, Cia. Cachorra, Contra Filé, Elefante, Esqueleto Coletivo, Experiência Imersiva Ambiental (EIA) and Frente 3 de Fevereiro, included in its work processes an interest in other fields of research. Community networks and groups established connections with movements in the defence of housing programmes, and examined questions relating to the situation of homeless people, ecology, racism, urban planning, and social memory and division, leading to the expansion of the interdisciplinary activities of these artists. Urban interventions, performances, direct actions, media tactics, culture jamming and installations, in addition to all other possible means, are some of the tools used by these collectives to reinforce their political resistance.

Between 2003 and 2007, some of these groups had a closer relationship with the house taken over by Prestes Maia (2002-2007)⁵. In this context, terms such as "urban revitalization" and "gentrification" became key words among these groups. Cheap and accessible communication media, such as posters, were produced by the groups in order to emphasise the dichotomies between social inequality and economic interests, as suggested by the image *Vida X Propriedade*, by Esqueleto Coletivo. Other groups found in the appropriation and subversion of real estate companies advertising supports the way to build their own symbolic weapons, such as the barricades made by the Elefante collective, which, joined together, formed the word "DIGNIDADE" ["dignity"]. Used as a tactical image and a linguistic tool, this conceptual intervention alerted, the media and public opinion to the social situation of the families of the unemployed.

Events such as *Arte Contemporânea do Movimento dos Sem-*



ESQUELETO COLETIVO *Vida X Propriedade*, 2005. São Paulo. Courtesy: Esqueleto Coletivo



COLECTIVO ELEFANTE *Dignidade*, 2003. São Paulo. Courtesy: Antonio Brasiliano

Teto do Centro (ACMSTC), which took place in December, 2003 in Prestes Maia, brought together, for the first time, art collectives and the people living in the building. Although, according to Fabiane Borges, a member of the Catadores de Histórias group and one of the organisers of ACMSTC, the experience conveyed a sense "of profound otherness, an encounter with physical, spatial and subjective architecture", the initiative gave rise to controversy and debates regarding the activities carried out by the artists in the squat, whose inhabitants are under permanent threat of eviction⁶. The idea of "one-sentence drama", used by the collective Cia. Cachorra in one of their performances at this squat, provides a good sense of the atmosphere in which artists,



COLECTIVO PORO *Enxurrada de letras*, 2004. Belo Horizonte. Courtesy: Poro



COLECTIVO LARANJAS *Parada Laranjas*, 2004. Porto Alegre. Courtesy: Mariane Rotter.

activists, social movements and squatters had to face the authorities: *Zona de Poesia Árida*, a place where everything gradually fell apart, and where it was necessary, as Fabiana Prado, a member of Cia. Cachorra, explained "to pay attention to those relationships and the way in which the administration treats these people, with sticks and stones".

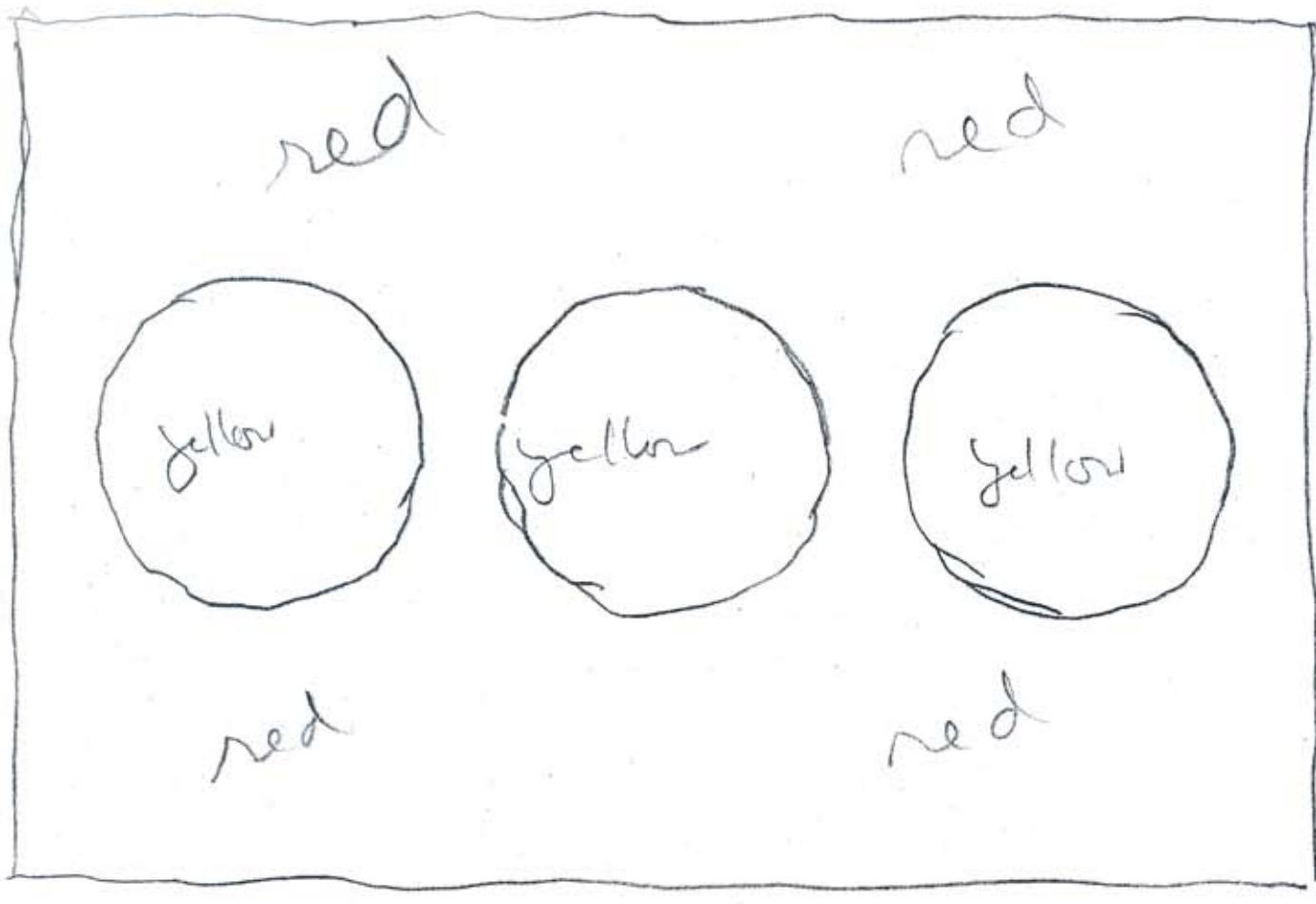
Aesthetic experiences or, more frequently, those aimed at carrying out a form of activism, reveal the way in which a new social space can be created only if Brazilian collectives begin to put into practice the necessary dialogic for a more critical interpretation of their actions. The expanded field of urban interventions is already in operation. What remains is a more thorough systematization of those experiences and a desire to build a creative and dissident history of the contemporary art produced in this country.

More information:

www.giabahia.blogspot.com
www.abrigolaranja.blogspot.com
www.agentilcarioca.com.br
www.poro.redezero.org
www.espacocoringa.com.br
www.capacetec.net
www.arte-esferapublica.org
www.cinefalcatura.wordpress.com

NOTES

1. Formed by Mario Ramiro, Hudinilson Junior and Rafael França, 3Nós3 carried out a series of interventions in São Paulo between 1979 and 1982.
2. Fragment from the interview by Mario Ramiro. This, as well as other interpretations, added to other ideas and concepts presented here, form part of the research for my master's thesis, *Insurgências Poéticas. Arte ativista e Ação Coletiva*, written at the History Department of the University of São Paulo, and which I finished in 2008.
3. In this sense, I also refer to the formation of alternative and independent circuits in the country, to a detailed cartography of Brazil's collective art production, and to the publication of critical articles on this subject. Initiatives such as *Salão de m.a.i.o.* (2004 e 2005), organised by the Grupo de Interferência Ambiental, the Centro de Contracultura (2001-2007), by Graziela Kunsch, *Circuitos em Vídeo*, by Newton Goto, the CORO network, as well as research directed by Flavia Vivacqua, available on the internet (<http://www.corocoletivo.org>), and the digital magazine *Rizoma* (<http://www.rizoma.net>), founded by Ricardo Rosas, were crucial to this process.
4. The same can be said of the works by Artur Barrio, Cildo Meireles, Antônio Manuel and Paulo Bruscky.
5. The occupation of Prestes Maia, which has approximately 35 storeys, divided into two blocks, and stands in the centre of São Paulo, brought together 468 families which occupied this building, by means of an intervention organised by the Movimento dos Sem-Teto do Centro (MSTC).
6. For more on this and other subjects, see the text by Gavin Adams, "Coletivos de arte e a ocupação Prestes Maia em São Paulo", which can be found at: <http://magazines.documenta.de/frontend/article.php?IdLanguage=9&NrArticle=245>.



Anton Van Dalen
above: do-it-yourself flag of Christiania

Thanks to the Solo Foundation